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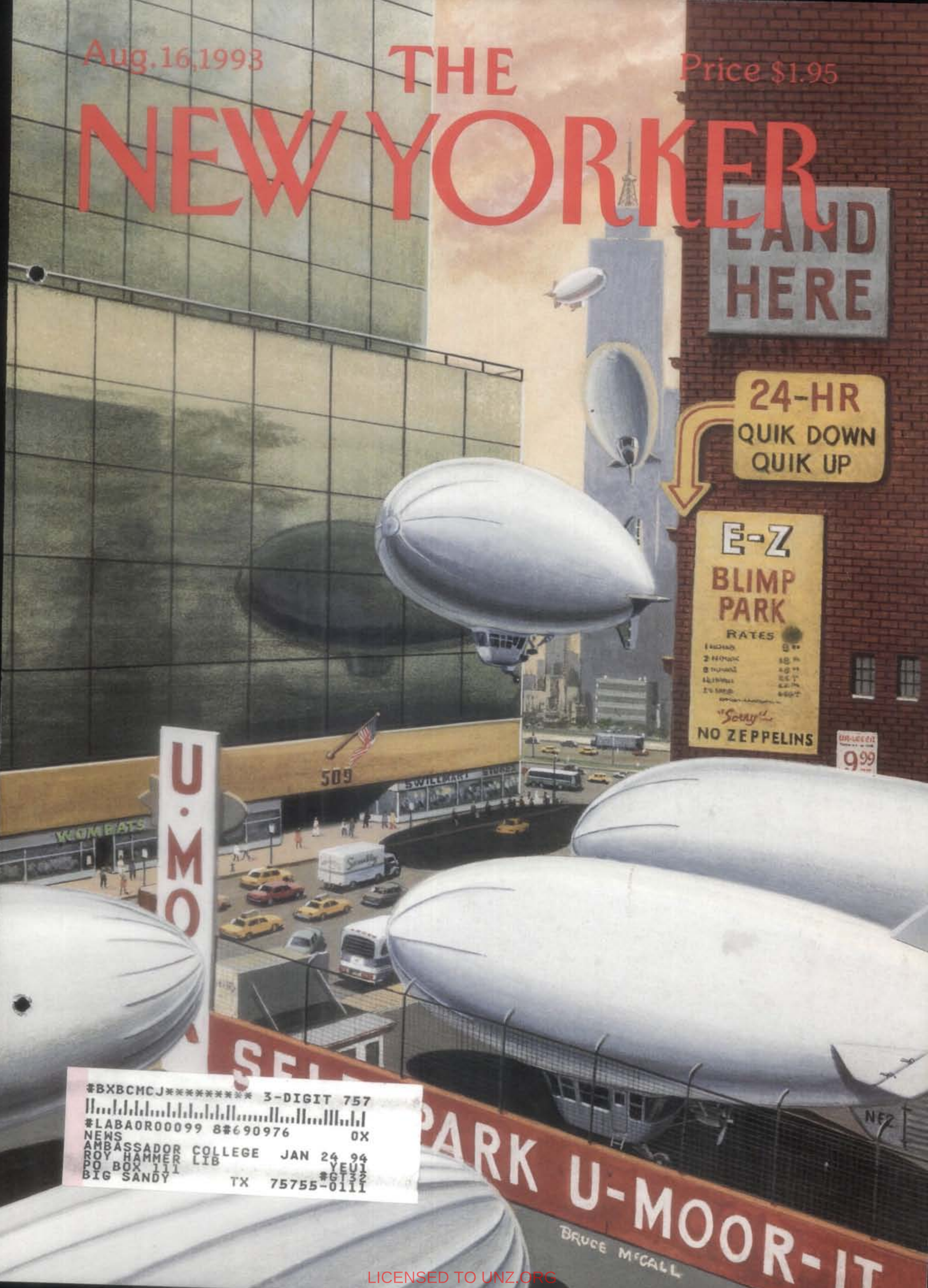
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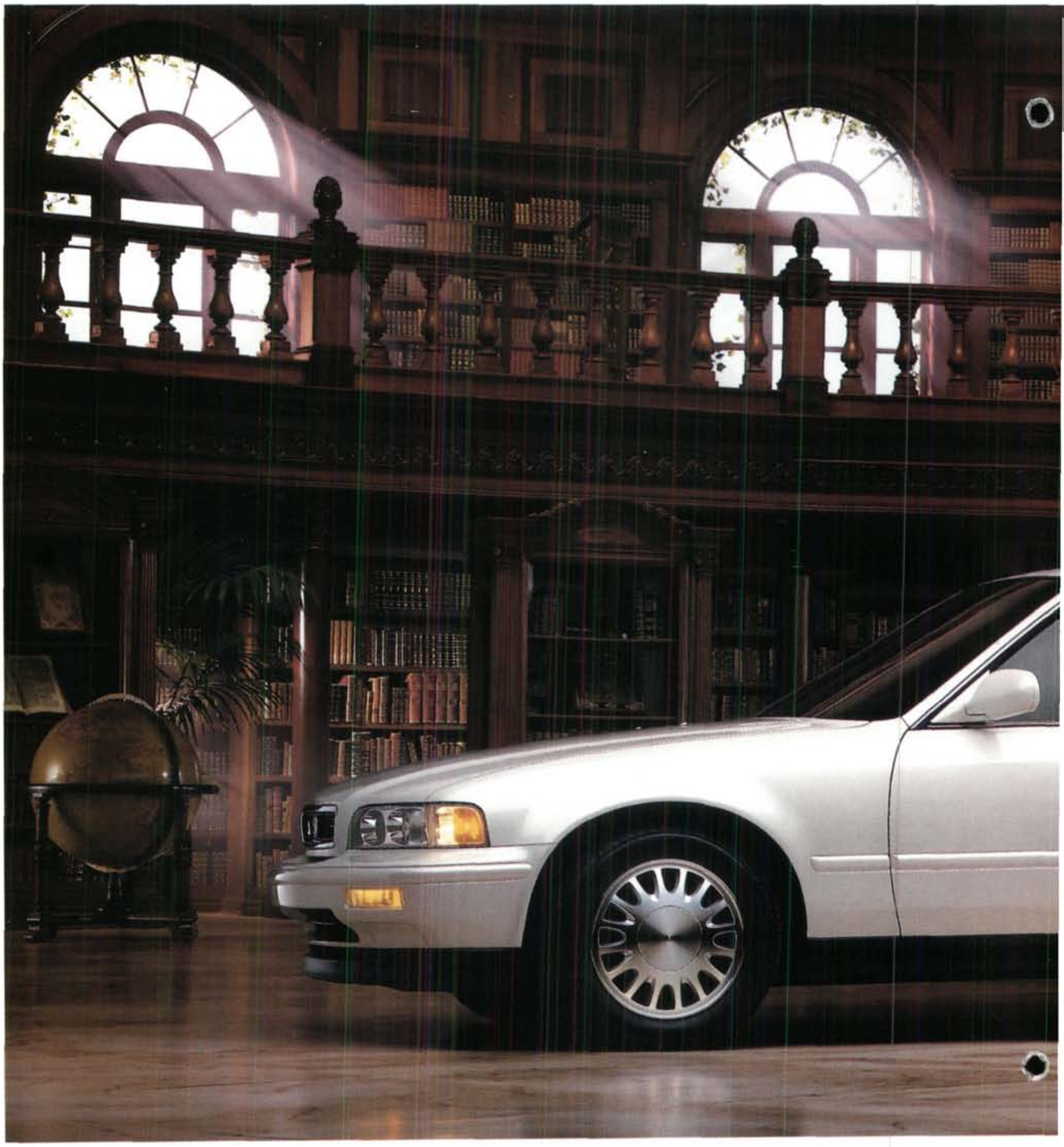

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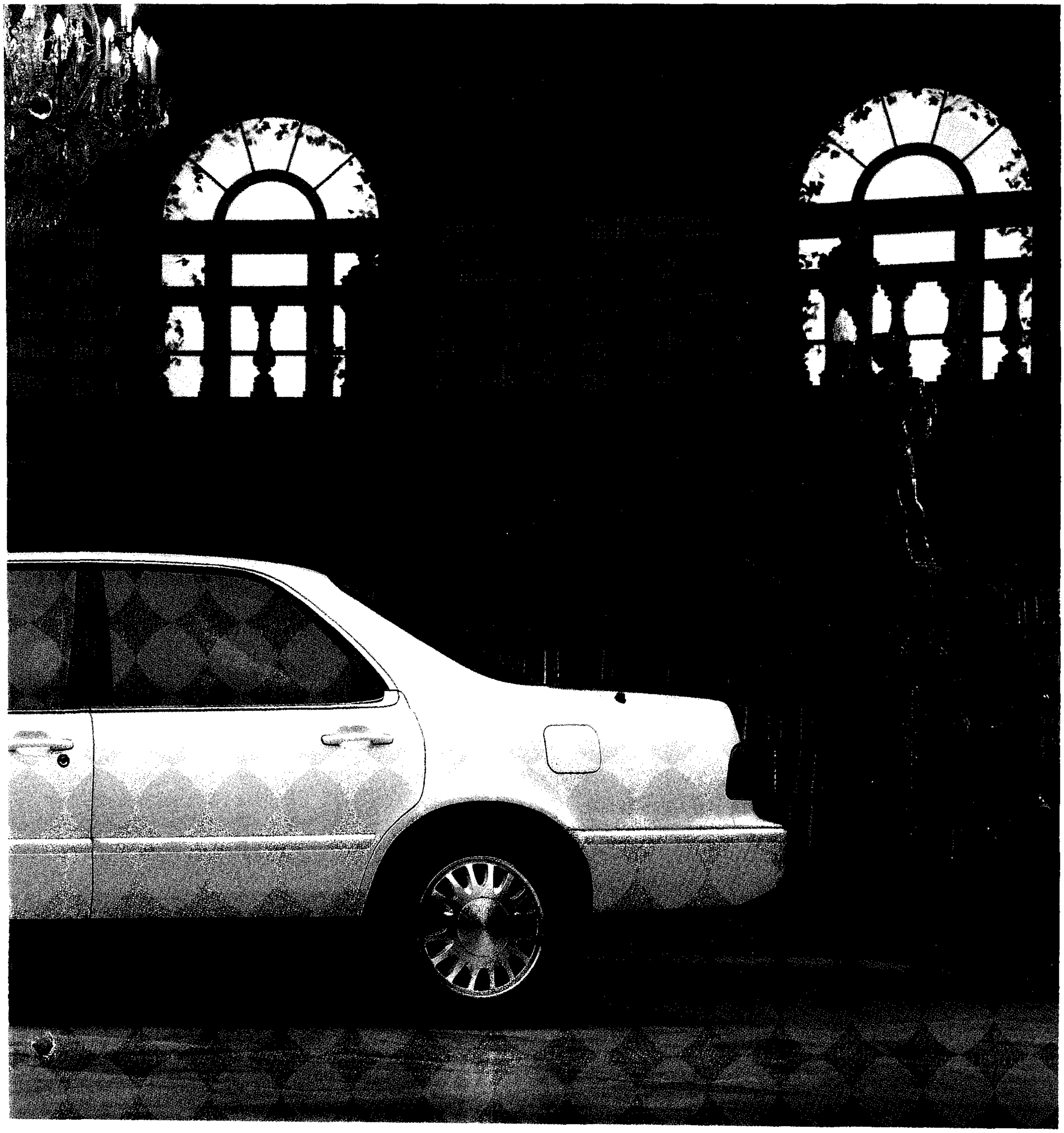

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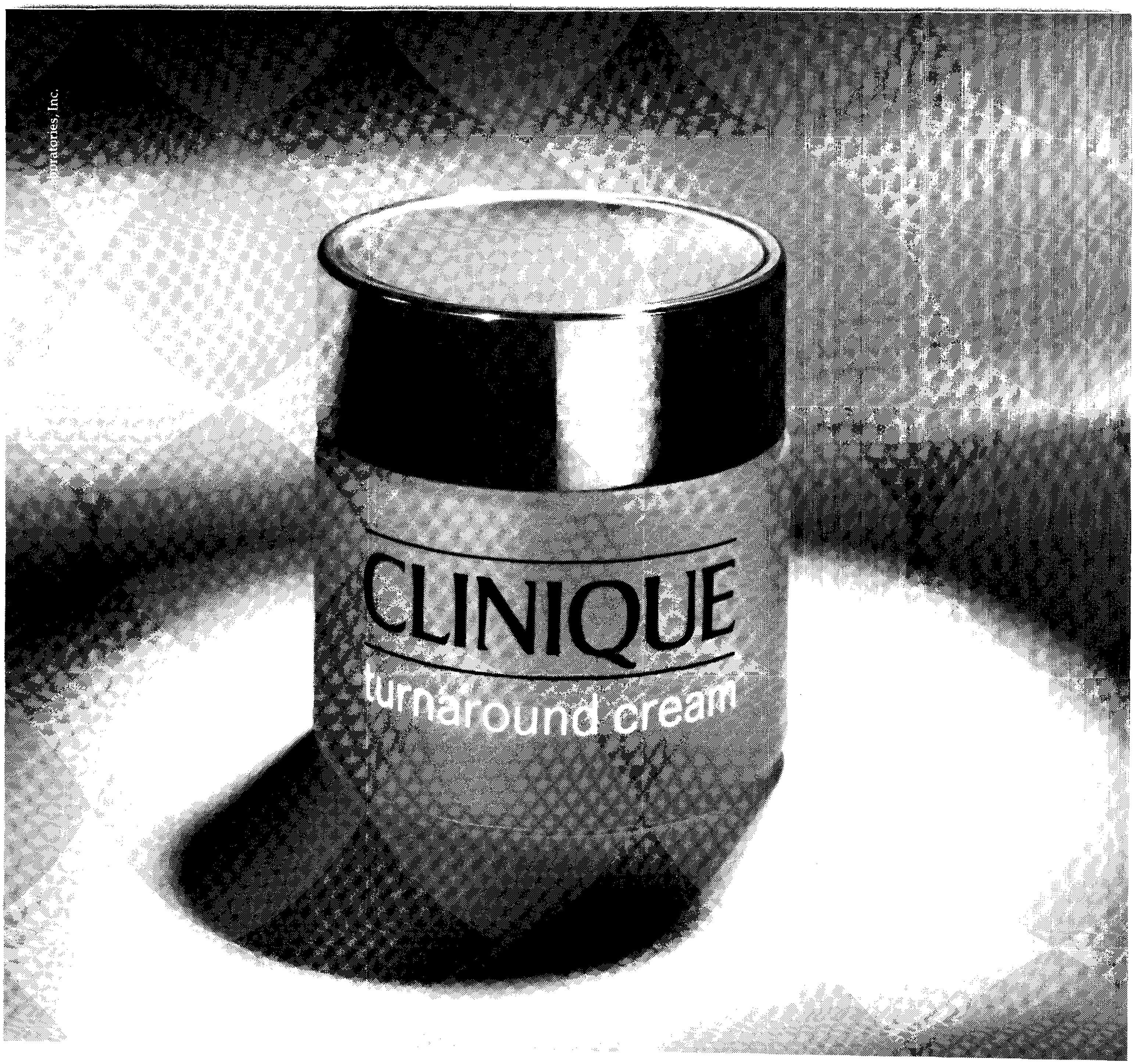

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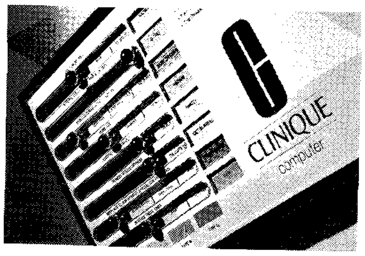

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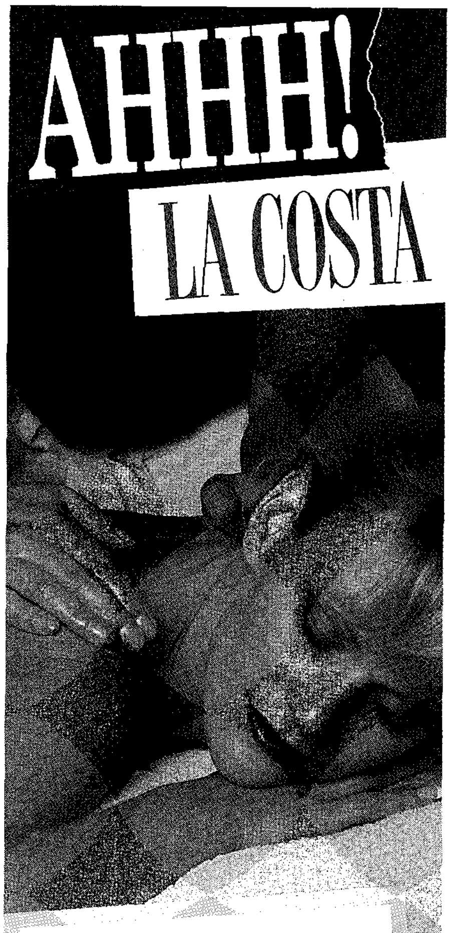

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COMMENT

WRONGFUL DEATH

IN jurisdictions that impose the death penalty, the ultimate misstep is the execution of a person for a crime that somebody else committed. The State of Texas, not for the first time, is perilously close to taking that misstep. Gary Graham, now twenty-nine years old, has been under sentence of death since 1981, when he was seventeen. As a teen-ager, Graham was undeniably a dangerous criminal: he has admitted to ten armed robberies, during one of which he shot and wounded one of his victims. There's no doubt he deserved to go to jail. But there is a great deal of doubt that he is guilty of the murder for which he is scheduled, on August 17th, to be given a lethal injection.

Death sentences for people who later prove to be innocent are less unusual than is commonly supposed. Just in the last five months, four once condemned prisoners have been released after spending years on death row. Two of them, in Alabama and Texas, turned out to have been convicted on fabricated evidence and perjured testimony; the third, in Texas, was convicted because of evidence that was withheld; the fourth, in Maryland, was exonerated by DNA analysis, a technology that was unavailable at the time of his trial. As for Gary Graham, he was convicted solely on the testimony of a single witness to the crime—a witness who testified that she saw the killer's face for no more than a second. Since the trial, six witnesses have come forward to swear that the killer they saw could not have been Graham; five more have placed Graham elsewhere that night, far from the scene of the crime. Graham's fate now rests with the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, which has maintained that questions of guilt or innocence are outside its purview. Last week, however, Judge Pete Lowry, of the state district court in Austin, ordered the board to grant him a hearing, "because under federal constitutional law and under Texas law there is no other mechanism to prevent the execution of an innocent person."

Judge Lowry is not alone in concluding that something has gone terribly awry here: the Congressional Black Caucus has called for a hearing in which the evidence for Graham might finally be presented. Congress is hardly the proper arena in which to investigate a state murder convic-

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tion. But the institutionalized aberrations afflicting the Texas criminal-justice system, which allow even the most compelling claims of innocence to languish for years, cry out for some sort of review.

In Texas, indigent capital defendants like Graham are regularly assigned inexperienced, incompetent, and, invariably, poorly paid attorneys. Because execution dates are scheduled well before death-row inmates' appeals have been exhausted, capital defenders must routinely churn out last-minute pleadings—a routine that has numbed judges to substantive claims of innocence. Attorneys defending Graham and other inmates maintain that law-enforcement officials have repeatedly withheld possibly exculpatory evidence from them. Racism plays its sordid part as well: a white person's murderer is far more likely to be sentenced to death than someone convicted of killing a Hispanic or an African-American.

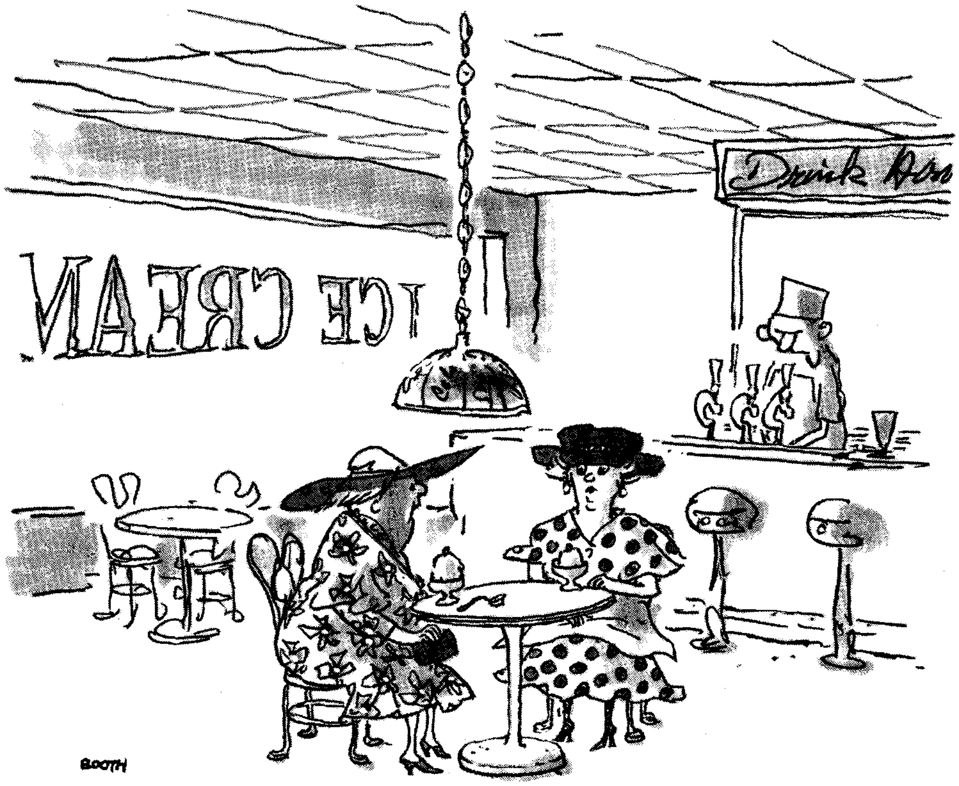
The current Supreme Court, in its anxiety to combat what Chief Justice William Rehnquist calls, without irony, the "lack of finality" in capital cases, has made it much harder for prisoners like Graham to seek redress. In January, in a startling opinion rejecting the appeal of a Texas death-row inmate named Leonel Herrera, the Chief Justice asserted that since "the presumption of innocence disappears" upon conviction in a procedurally fair trial, a defendant's "threshold showing" of innocence must "necessarily be extraordinarily high" in order to merit consideration in federal court. Short of meeting that standard, Rehnquist concluded, "a claim of 'actual innocence' is not itself a constitutional claim," and therefore has no business in federal court at all. Instead, convicted prisoners claiming to have evidence of innocence should appeal for executive clemency, "the historic remedy for preventing miscarriages of justice where judicial process has been exhausted."

In relegating the fates of convicted state prisoners to discretionary acts of gubernatorial grace, the Supreme Court has thrown the fundamental question of guilt or innocence straight into the lion's den of partisan politics. In Texas, as in much of the South's so-called Death Belt, opposition to capital punishment is tantamount to political suicide. Since assuming office, in 1991, Governor Ann Richards—a Democrat and, by Texas standards, something of a liberal (dread word!)—has presided over twenty-six executions, more than any other governor in the state's history. Eleven additional executions, including Graham's, are scheduled for the next four weeks.

Governor Richards finds herself in a dilemma created by the public's anger against crime and criminals. But when an innocent person is punished a guilty one goes free. No one involved in Graham's case—not even his defense counsel—has attempted to track down either of two other suspects since Graham was first charged with the crime. If Graham was wrongly convicted, the actual perpetrator is probably out on the streets, as are those guilty of the crimes for which the innocent men from Alabama, Texas, and Maryland were once condemned to death. Should Graham be executed, no one will bother to reinvestigate the case, of course, since capital defenders will be too busy staving off the execution of some living death-row inmate, and the state will have fulfilled the function of making somebody pay for the crime. One of the oft-noted paradoxes of administering the death penalty is that the convict often receives as much sympathy as the victim, whose innocence was not enough to save his or her life. But in a case where the convict is also innocent the execution merely creates a second victim. It doesn't right the wrong; it clones the wrong.

The fact that one Texas judge has seen fit to insist that Graham finally be granted a pardons-board hearing does not insure that the hearing will be fair—or even that it will be held, since the Texas attorney general plans to appeal the judge's order. And if, despite everything, there is a clemency recommendation, it will probably result in Governor Richards' commuting Graham's death sentence to life imprisonment—which, ironically, might make it no easier for him to get his conviction overturned. Without an imminent execution date, his case will no longer be a high priority for judges and volunteer lawyers working in a system that is driven, in more senses than one, by deadlines.

Still to be determined is whether Graham's claims are adjudged strong enough to win him a federal-court hearing. Should the pardons board recommend against clemency and the federal courts again deny his appeal, his case may yet wind up, for the fourth time, before the Supreme Court. If it does, an early task facing Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg—who during her recent confirmation hearings repeatedly declined to state her position on the death penalty—will be to help define exactly how innocent a person must be before his execution is deemed unconstitutional. ♦



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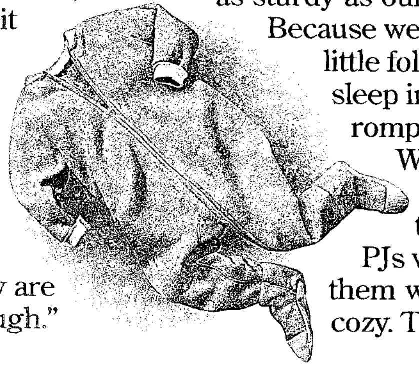
"I'm not sleepy yet!"



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Tomorrow and Tomorrow

"ANNIE WARBUCKS" begins at the precise moment when "Annie" ended—with the eternally curly-topped orphan clutching Sandy and celebrating F.D.R.'s "New Deal for Christmas"—but for Andrea McArdle, the original Annie, time has not stood still. She has long since grown out of her red dress and black Mary Janes and into the big Broadway voice that made her a singing sensation when "Annie" opened in 1977. Ms. McArdle's voice still rings like a bell, and if the last time you heard it was on the "Annie" cast album, check out "Les Misérables," in which, as of next week, she plays Fantine.

Allowing for different locales—nineteenth-century France instead of nineteen-thirties New York—Fantine is Annie gone awry. Both provide slave labor for abusive bosses, Fantine at a factory and Annie at the orphanage. Without Daddy Warbucks, the little orphan's big number might have been the harrowing "I Dreamed a Dream" rather than the hopeful "Tomorrow." Andrea McArdle has the pipes to put either song over, but if you can't bear the thought of Annie gone bad, you can open the time capsule that is "Annie Warbucks," where nine-year-old Kathryn Zaremba is battling evil with a plucky smile and tuneful ballads.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL—Michael Cumpsty, Miriam Healy-Louie, Joan MacIntosh, Henry Stram, and Graham Winton have the leads in Shakespeare's play. Previews through Aug. 14. Opens Aug. 15 at 8. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 861-7277.)

BLACK COMEDY/WHITE LIARS—Two comedies from the sixties by Peter Shaffer. The double bill features Anne Bobby, Keene Curtis, Peter MacNicol, Nancy Marchand, Kate Mulgrew, and Brian Murray. Previews begin Aug. 11. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

OPENED RECENTLY

ANGELS IN AMERICA: MILLENNIUM APPROACHES—The first half of Tony Kushner's epic work is set in 1985, at the height of the Reagan counter-revolution, and it maps the trickle-down effect of self-interest as Kushner's characters ruthlessly pursue their private and public destinies. The Pulitzer Prize-winning play is a saga about sexual politics, death, and decency. Not to be missed. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/31/93.) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

ANNIE WARBUCKS—The sequel to "Annie." With Kathryn Zaremba, in the musical's title role, Harve Presnell, and Donna McKechnie. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

BLOOD BROTHERS—A glum non-musical musical, imported from Britain, about twin boys who are separated at birth. The boys later become friends, love the same girl, and die violent deaths. Willy Russell wrote book, music, and lyrics, to no avail. The cast includes Brian d'Arcy James, Stephanie Lawrence, and Mark Michael Hutchinson. Shaun and David Cassidy and Petula Clark join the cast on Aug. 16, replacing Mr. Hutchinson, Mr. James, and Ms. Lawrence, all of whose last performance is Aug. 14. (5/10/93) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

FOOL MOON—Bill Irwin and David Shiner are the inspired clowns in a show that is perfection itself. The only sound you'll hear is the merry music of the Red Clay Ramblers and the abundant laughter of the audience. (3/8/93) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.)

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 1993—Once again, a galaxy of parodies that sharpen into satire. Among the shows under consideration are "Guys and Dolls," "Falsettos," "Les Misérables," and "The Phantom of the Opera." Gerard Alessandrini, as if you had to be told, is the clever writer and director, and Susanne Blakeslee, Allison Briner, Brad Oscar, and Craig Wells are the performers. (1/25/93) (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.)

THE GOODBYE GIRL—Bernadette Peters and Martin Short, two brilliant, funny stars, transform this otherwise indifferent musical adaptation of Neil Simon's movie into a sporadically festive evening. Score by Marvin Hamlisch, lyrics by David Zippel. Michael Kidd directed. (3/15/93) (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100. Closes Aug. 15.)

IN THE SUMMER HOUSE—Lincoln Center Theatre presents Jane Bowles' 1953 play, with Alina Arenal, Frances Conroy, Kali Rocha, Jaime Tirelli, and Dianne Wiest. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes Aug. 22.)

JEFFREY—A comedy, by Paul Rudnick, about love in the age of AIDS. It is less a fleshed-out play than a series of Scenes from Gay Life, but Mr. Rudnick can quip with the best of them. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 420-8000.)

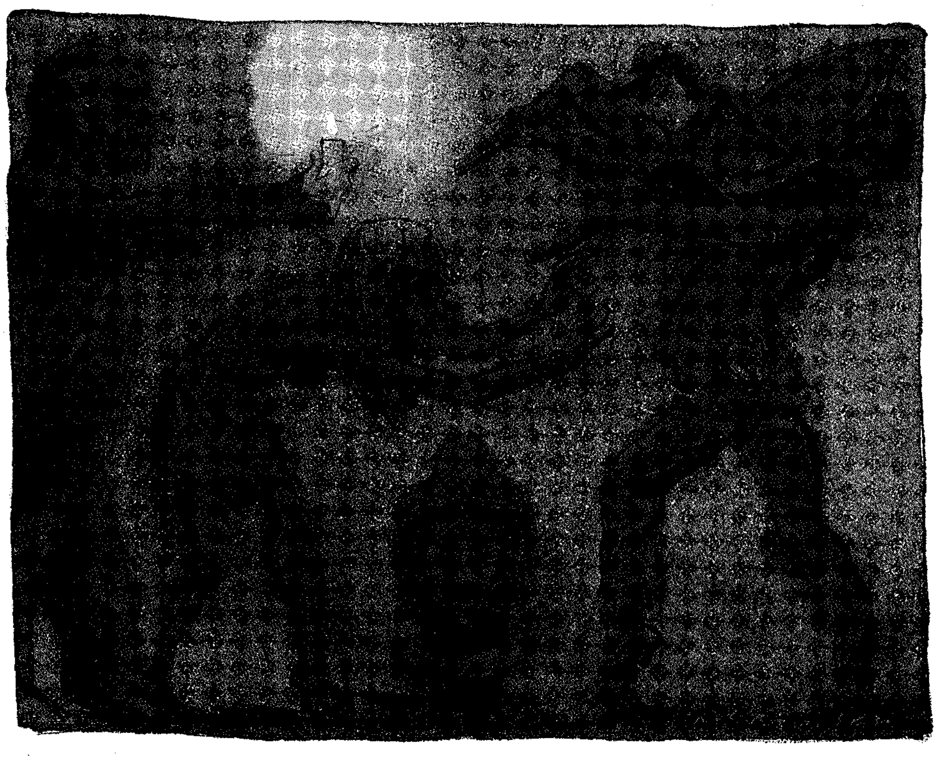
KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN—A musical, based on the novel by Manuel Puig, with a distinguished book by Terrence McNally, a star performance by Brent Carver, as the heroic homosexual window dresser, and another by the redoubtable Chita Rivera, in the title role. Harold Prince was the director. The songs are by John Kander and Fred Ebb. (5/24/93) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

LATER LIFE—The reunion, after thirty years, of a middle-aged man and woman who were once in love is at the heart of this play by A. R. Gurney. The scene is a cocktail party in Boston, where the couple are constantly interrupted by the other guests, who arrive two by two. Mr. Gurney has written with his customary wit and perception, and the actors do him proud. The play was seen recently at Playwrights Horizons. (6/14/93) (Westside Theatre, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

A PERFECT GANESH—Terrence McNally's play tells the story of two middle-aged women from Connecticut making what turns out to be a pilgrimage through India. The acting does credit to the dramatist, which is saying a lot. Zoe Caldwell plays a matron, and Frances Sternhagen is her travelling companion. Fisher Stevens shows admirable adaptability as every man in the cast, and Dominic Cuskern, as the Hindu god Ganesha, is a source of innocent and not so innocent merriment. John Tillinger directed. (7/12/93) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes Aug. 21.)

SHAKESPEARE FOR MY FATHER—A marvellous one-woman show, in which Lynn Redgrave reviews her own life in a search for her unloving father, Michael Redgrave. She combines anecdotes, brilliant thumbnail impersonations of British actors, and wry reminiscence with passages from Shakespeare. (5/10/93) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 944-9450.)

THE SISTERS ROSENSWEIG—Wendy Wasserstein's play, a comedy with serious undertones, is about the reunion in London of three American Jewish sisters—an international banker, a travel writer, and a wife and mother who's a professional dispenser of advice.



Keene Curtis, Anne Bobby, and Peter MacNicol in "Black Comedy."

JAMES MCMULLAN

They are portrayed by Jane Alexander, Christine Estabrook, and Madeline Kahn. (Their last performances in the roles are on Aug. 14.) The spirit of Chekhov hovers but never intrudes. Laughter is continuous. Beginning Aug. 16, the three Rosensweig sisters will be played by Michael Learned, Linda Lavin, and Joanne Camp, and Hal Linden will replace Robert Klein. (11/2/92) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Sweet Daddy and Amazing Grace—Clyde Wayne MacMillian's musical is the classic preacher-meets-floozy tale with a few twists, some voodoo, and a lot of gospel singing. Christopher M. H. Wilkerson and Elmeria Rose are charming as the leads, and their voices are terrific, as are those of all the rest of the cast. (American Theatre of Actors, 314 W. 54th St. For reservations, call 886-9850.)

Three Hotels—This new play by Jon Robin Baitz is no more than a technical exercise, but what technique! Debra Monk and Ron Rifkin are superb as husband and wife; the versatile Joe Mantello directed. (Circle Repertory Company, 99 Seventh Ave. S. 924-7100.)

The Who's Tommy—Pete Townshend's music—however muted for Broadway—has an indubitable thrill, but director Des McAnuff's production is caught on the horns of a theatrical dilemma that no amount of slick, exhausting spectacle can resolve. The hero, that deaf, dumb, and blind kid, is spectacularly passive, and thus unreachable, unknowable, and essentially undramatic. (5/3/93) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

BEAU JEST: Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CRAZY FOR YOU:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FOREVER PLAID:** Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400. . . . **GUYS AND DOLLS:** Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **JELLY'S LAST JAM:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Andrea McArdle joins the cast on Aug. 16. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **OLEANNA:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 307-4100. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE WILL ROGERS FOLLIES:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 730-8200.

DANCE

IN TOWN

Feld Ballets/NY—The fifth annual summer preview season. Aug. 11 and Aug. 17 at 8, and Aug. 14 at 2: "Contra Pose," "Doo Dah Day (no possum, no sop, no taters)," and "Skara Brae.". . . ¶ Aug. 12-14 and Aug. 16 at 8: "Play Bach," "Charmed Lives," "Ion," and "MRI" (preview). (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through Aug. 21.)

OUT OF TOWN

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival—Aug. 11-12 at 8, Aug. 13 at 8:30, and Aug. 14 at 2 and 8:30: Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 7:30 and Aug. 13 at 7: "Cho-Mu," a collaborative work that recently received its première on Roosevelt Island, by the choreographer Joanna Haigood and the artist Reiko Goto, in which the audience follows the dancers from Ms. Haigood's Zaccho Dance Theatre through an installation of sculptures by Ms. Goto. . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 5 and Aug. 15 at 7: Soloists Steve Krieckhaus, Suprapto Suryodarmo, Kumiko Kimoto, Jimmy Turner, and Penny Campbell. . . . ¶ Aug. 17 at 8: Ballet British Columbia. Through Aug. 21. (Becket, Mass. 1-413 243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE

Alloyed Noise

Like political perspectives, radically opposed styles of rock and roll often have a lot in common. In theory, you wouldn't catch a headbanger and a skinhead dead in the same mosh pit, but the sonic attack and misanthropic energy of speed metal is actually very much akin to that of hardcore punk. With roots in both genres, Anthrax gives proof to the maxim that everything that thrashes must converge. The band started out as part of downtown New York's cooler-than-thou hardcore scene in the early eighties, but by the time the quintet started making records, in 1984, its sound had taken on a decidedly metallic edge, incorporating flashy guitar solos and piercing falsetto howls. The band crashed through an even more formidable barrier in 1987, delving into rap on the title track of its "I'm the Man" EP. A cover of Public Enemy's "Bring the Noise" followed in 1991, featuring Chuck D and Flavor Flav, and the two groups joined forces for a video and a tour.

For its appearances at Roseland on August 11 and 12, Anthrax will showcase material from its latest album, "Sound of White Noise," which reintroduces ex-Armored Saint singer John Bush and has been described as placing a new emphasis on—yikes—melody and song craftsmanship. The faithful needn't fret, though; there's little on this darkly compelling album that anybody's mother would love. And isn't that the standard against which all great anti-social pop music is ultimately measured?

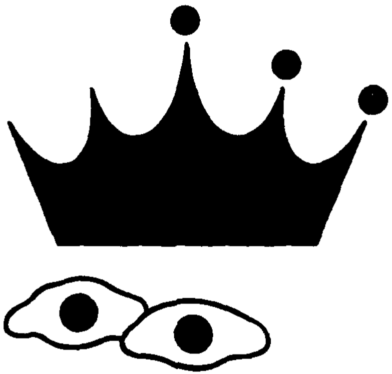
(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out some of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—**HILDEGARDE** and Alex Bennett Kahn are splitting duties in the Oak Room, through Aug. 14. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Once you get past the rough bits here—the hordes of tourists, the cattle-car seating, the stiff prices—you're likely to find yourself face to face with some of the biggest names in jazz. On Aug. 10-15, the **RAY BROWN** trio, featuring Benny Green and Jeff Hamilton, performs with vocalist Marlena Shaw; and Latin-jazz trumpeter Charlie Sepulveda brings his band, the Turnaround, to the club on Aug. 16. Beginning Aug. 17: the smooth, sultry interplay of Latin-jazz flutist **DAVE VALENTIN** and jazz chanteuse **ERNESTINE ANDERSON.** Dining.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—This big, airy folk-and-rock club used to be the site of a lot of music-industry bashes, but now it's an eclectic and hard-to-figure-out venue for the good, the bad, and (sometimes still) the great. The Canadian quintet **BARENAKED LADIES** comes to the club on Aug. 9-12. Based in Toronto, this charming young band—whose lineup is entirely male, and often quite smartly attired—plays guitar-driven pop that is at once quirky and eminently hummable. On Aug. 17, the still-

How do you like your eggs?



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NIGHT LIFE–Cont'd

sensational **DARLENE LOVE** serves up yet another of her Tuesday-night specials. Love's roughly bimonthly gig seems to have been extended indefinitely, and nobody's complaining.

Café Sin-é, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—A small peach-walled storefront, Sin-é is usually given over to a young, earthy crowd that drinks Rolling Rock or espresso and waits for some Irish musician or other to blow in and play a set. The café doesn't have a schedule, so it's often too late when one hears that some great Irish rocker has made a stop here—a frustrating state of affairs, perhaps, but one can have fun just hoping and watching the door.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The pastel uptown spa known as the Café Carlyle is closed for the summer, but across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, the smoothly sentimental **KURT WIETING** presides at the piano.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—The city's most famed rock club—a dark, narrow cave with neon-beer-sign stalactites and ancestral graffiti—is part sacred burial ground and part historic landmark, but it hasn't succumbed to nostalgia: new and used bands of every stripe continue to burn brightly here. On Aug. 13, a band that calls itself the **VOLUPTUOUS HORROR OF KAREN BLACK**—led, appropriately enough, by a flamboyant and oddly interesting-looking female singer—offers what could be described as cabaret rock. On Aug. 14: a double portion of tasty progressive pop from New Zealand, with **STRAITJACKET FITS** and the **BATS.**

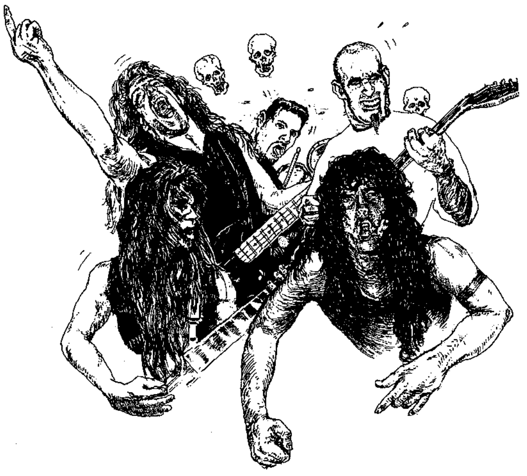
Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7900)—A softly lit, low-ceilinged, roughly Manhattan-shaped jazz grotto. Through Aug. 15: the **GEORGE COLEMAN** quartet. Starting on Aug. 17, the pianist **ROLAND HANNA** accompanies vocalist **CARRIE SMITH.** On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL,** the Thomas Edison of reverb, leads a trio. Dining.

Grand, 76 E. 13th St. (777-0600)—A cross between an old-fashioned split-level night club and a parking garage decorated for a senior prom. Despite the balloons and the candy-colored lights, this is a serious room for serious rock-and-rolling. You can either vibrate up front, near a wall-o'-speakers, or lounge around the bar in the back and follow the show on a video monitor. On Aug. 11: the bittersweet pop of the **ODDS,** with **MATT KEATING** and the **WOODIES** getting things off to a buoyant start. The popular reggae/dance-hall artist **PATO BANTON** appears on Aug. 13; his opening act is the ska band Bim Skala Bim.

Manny's Car Wash, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—A bright spot on the square-by-definition Upper East Side club scene. Don't go expecting to be sprayed with soapy water and massaged by large brushes: the fluorescent sign outside is the only car-wash reference. Inside, the place looks like an adman's idea of a blues bar. This week features the usual stellar lineup of blues and roots-oriented acts, including **LOUP GAROU** zydeco on Aug. 11, **JOHNNY AND THE HEADHUNTERS** on Aug. 13, and the R. & B. of the **MIGHTY SWEETONES** on Aug. 15. On Aug. 12, the blues guitarist **BOBBY RADCLIFF** performs.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—The bands that play here today will be playing somewhere more expensive tomorrow. On Aug. 13, **THE AUTHORITY** and Faith are here for a night. The **LYRES** are in on Aug. 14. On Aug. 16, the unregenerate Washington, D.C., punk band **FUGAZI** rolls into Hoboken. Like the Clash and Gang of Four before them, this quartet of totally committed, noncommercial rockers operates at the intersection of the political and the personal. Sometimes the political prevails, and mere sloganeering noise ensues, but mostly the band distills the unease and fury of punk without becoming simplistic or nihilistic. A new CD, "In on the Kill Taker," is full of the pauses, tempo shifts, and tonal leaps that keep it all interesting. The band has made sure that you can buy it for a lot less than any major-label release.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—A moondust-in-your-hair cabaret with plenty of niceties, if you're so inclined: an ear-popping express elevator in which you can mingle with the famous, tables scattered with plastic diamonds and sapphires, and an amazing view. A summerlong Lerner and Loewe revue, called "The Night They Invented Champagne," is currently under way, with **MAUREEN BRENNAN, EDDIE KORBICH, JULIET LAMBERT,** and **MARTIN VIDNOVIC.** This light but energe[illegible] show presents such classics as "On the Street Where You Live" and less well known numbers like "She Is Not Thinking of Me." The singers have big, confident voices and an intimate way with lyrics—no thanks to the overbearing sound system. Closed Mondays.



Anthrax at Roseland.

JARRETT HUDDLESTON

Ritz, 254 W. 54th St. (541-8900)—This space was once a theatre, as the cherubim friezes and Louis the Something ceiling attest. Then it was Studio 54, and if you try hard you can still hear the grunts, moans, and snorts of seventies disco ghosts. Now it's a huge rock club, where the orchestra has been gutted for maximum standing capacity. On Aug. 14, **MOTÖRHEAD** tops a bill including the similarly flab-free rock of Type O Negative, Marauder, Stick, and Leeway. The first and best of the wave of British metal bands that whipped their genre into leaner, harder shape more than a decade ago, Motörhead prefigured the thrash onslaught in the States.

Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. (247-0200)—A big, dark, sweaty rock club with a twist: the vast floor can accommodate ballroom dancing, and does so on Thursdays and Sundays. On other nights, flannel-clad stage divers hold forth. On Aug. 11-12: **ANTHRAX,** with White Zombie. Opening the show is a New York-based quartet called **QUICKSAND,** whose roots are in the same hard-core scene that spawned bands like Fugazi and Helmet, but wh[illegible] début album, "Slit," showcases a knack for gently insinuating melodies.

Sounds of Brazil, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—The closest thing in Manhattan to a rain forest, this venerable club has many selling points: tropical drinks, Brazilian food, faux palm trees, a thatch-roofed bar. The live music is primarily from Africa, Brazil, and the Caribbean, and the dance floor is usually hopping. On Aug. 12, New Orleans' celebrated **REBIRTH BRASS BAND** brings its soulful fusion of jazz, blues, and R. & B. to the venue, with special guests the **GROOVE COLLECTIVE,** an acid-jazz outfit. New York's own **JOHNNY RAY,** the singer and percussionist, serves up salsa on Aug. 16. Dining. Closed Sundays.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A pretty serious jazz shrine, where you have to pass within inches of the stage to reach the rest rooms. The **ART FARMER** quintet appears through Aug. 15, and starting Aug. 17 **RICHARD DAVIS** and friends—including John Hicks, Ricky Ford, Ronnie Burrage, and Cecil Bridgewater. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter **MILES EVANS** is in action on Mondays. Dining.

TAVERN ON THE GREEN, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—With the opening of the Chestnut Room, this legendary tourist haven is making a bid to attract serious jazz fans. The club, which resembles a hunting lodge, is every bit as over the top as the rest of the establishment, but the bookings have been impressive. The fifteen-piece, all-female big band Diva continues through Aug. 15. Vocalist Mark Murphy arrives on Aug. 17. Dining.

TIME CAFÉ, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Hidden within this trendy restaurant is a two-story club called Fez. Upstairs is a sumptuous Moroccan bar and lounge appointed with satin couches, mosaic tables, and Arabian-style fixtures. The downstairs room, where bands perform, is rather plain in comparison, but still a sleek and comfortable spot to take in a show. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** packs them in every Thursday. The fourteen-piece ensemble concentrates exclusively on the tricky, cacophonous work of its catalyst, Charles Mingus. **ME'SHELL NDEGE OCELLO** will be in on Aug. 14. Imagine the sultry, confident alto of a latter-day Nina Simone, singing (and rapping) eloquent tales of love and angst against a moody mélange of rock, jazz, and R. & B. that evokes the city in all its squalor and glory. Better yet, check out NdegeOcello and hear for yourself why there's such a buzz about her upcoming album, "Plantation Lullabies" (due next month on Maverick Records, Madonna's new label). Dining.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The world's most famous jazz club is also the last place in town that still looks, feels, and smells like a classic jazz club—subterranean, smoky, and thick with the spirits of past masters. **AHMAD JAMAL** is here through Aug. 15. The **DAVID MURRAY** trio starts up on Aug. 17. Mondays are reserved for the **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA.**

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Home to an endless Summer of Love. Wetlands is a groovy, psychedelic, thoroughly Green night club. It is filled more or less nightly with young bands who like to play long, swirling jams and with throngs of young Deadheads who like to listen to them. On Aug. 11, the San Francisco-based group **ZERO** delivers the sort of psychedelic pop that put its city on the rock-and-roll map. The kinda funky, kinda folkie pop of From Good Homes and the Bisbees is featured on Aug. 13; and on Aug. 14 the club welcomes the Machine, a Pink Floyd cover band.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A rarity among jazz clubs: somewhere you'd go to eat even if there were no music. The food is Italian, the atmosphere is pastels and soft lights, and the musicians, who set up in a room between the bar and the dining room, are first-rate. Pianist **HILTON RUIZ** and bassist **JIMMY ROWSER** perform Latin jazz through Aug. 14. Starting Aug. 16: a trio featuring **JOHN BUNCH** on piano, **STEVE LA SPINA** on bass, and **BUCKY PIZZARELLI** on guitar.

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

P.S. 122—Aug. 12-15 at 7:30: "Cabaret de la Gay (In D Minor)," Sharon Jane Smith's tribute to female cabaret performers. . . . ¶ Aug. 12-15 at 9: Ken Bullock's "My Life Is a Show," which is promoted as a "one-man Southern saga." (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

DIXON PLACE—Presenting "An Evening of Black Magic," a one-person, seven-character show starring Philip Brown and written by Deborah Long. (258 Bowery, near Houston St. 219-3088. Aug. 12-14 at 9. Through Aug. 21.)

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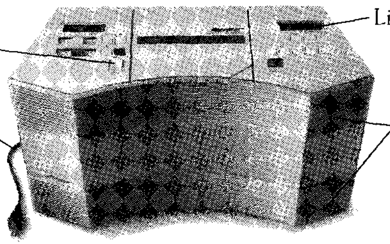

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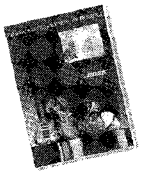

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ART

Kiln Time

THERE has been no collaboration in the world of modern crafts as fruitful as that of Gertrud and Otto Natzler, the Viennese ceramics artists who emigrated to Los Angeles in 1938. She made the sensual forms (she died in 1971), he did the handsome glazes (he's still alive), and together they created such a perfect marriage of shape and surface that the pots in the current retrospective at the American Craft Museum seem to have sprung into being fully formed. Whether the works are sexy and delicate, or lavalike and earthy, they are all unmistakably modern and functional, with clear links to both Vienna's own architectural modernism and the California modernism of Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra (also Viennese transplants).

In a very different strain of ceramics history, one that also emerged in California, Paul Soldner, building upon the pioneering work of his mentor Peter Voulkos, helped develop in the fifties a kind of equivalent in clay of the muscularity of Abstract Expressionist painting. Soldner, who is also the subject of a retrospective at the museum, is credited with creating an American version of raku, a low-fire, quick-cool Japanese process. Whereas the Natzlers developed their range within the confines of the functional, Soldner's work, especially that of the last decade, is big and heavy and highly sculptural. He is more an acquired taste.

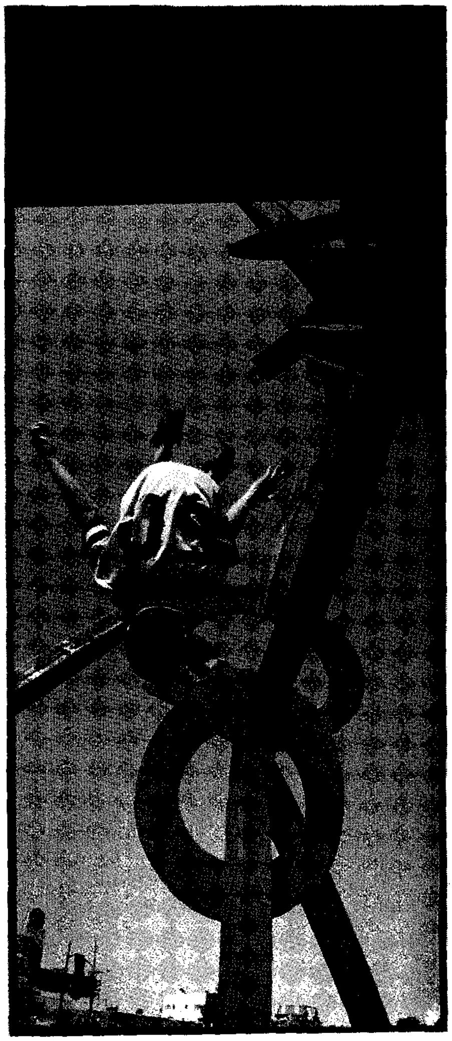
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Abstract Expressionism: Works on Paper, Selections from the Collection" begins with works from the mid-thirties and early forties, when the movement hadn't yet taken shape or been named, and it leaves off with a few eclectic pieces from the mid-sixties, when the style itself had already filtered down through three generations. Highlights include exquisite early drawings by Barnett Newman, surprisingly intense work by de Kooning, and paintings by William Baziotes that should revive his reputation as a colorist. Several lesser-known practitioners also flourish on paper, most notably Anne Ryan, Gerome Kamrowski, and Philip Guston. Through Sept. 12. . . . ¶ Verrocchio's magnificent sculpture "Christ and St. Thomas," a recently restored Medici commission completed in 1483, is currently on display (it's normally on view in a granary-cum-oratory in Florence). . . . ¶ An exhibition of historic hand-colored baseball cards. . . . ¶ Forty examples of Persian tiles, from the twelfth century through the late nineteenth, in a snug, one-room exhibit. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.) . . . **Note:** The roof garden, featuring six large sculptures, a great view, and cappuccino, is open when weather permits.

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Latin-American Artists of the Twentieth Century" includes more than ninety artists, most notably Tarsila do Amaral (1886-1973), a lively Cubo-Surrealist painter from Brazil, and Jesús Rafael Soto, the Venezuelan whose brilliant Op constructions, famous during the sixties, seem timely again. The younger generation, including Julio Galán and Guillermo Kuitca, is especially strong. Through Sept. 7. . . . ¶ "Pastime in Prints," very much a summer show, includes more than seventy depictions of leisure and outdoor activity by fifty artists, from Degas to Picasso to Hopper. Through Sept. 28. . . . ¶ "Multiple Images: Photographs Since 1965 from the Collection" features work by Jan Groover, Sol LeWitt, Duane Michals, and Charles Ray. Through Sept. 28. . . . ¶ Fifteen new large-scale linoleum-block prints by Chuck Close. Through Sept. 28. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.) . . . **Note:** The sculpture garden, at 14 W. 54th St., is open, free, on Fridays and Saturdays, from 6 to 10, with musical performances devoted to twentieth-century Latin America.

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum presents Rebecca Horn, a German artist whose imaginative work incorporates all manner of objects, from flamingo feathers to violins to tap shoes—everything except old-fashioned oil on canvas. . . . ¶ Two floors below but light-years apart, "Modern Masterpieces from the Permanent Collection," which includes paintings by Cézanne, Gauguin, van Gogh, Mondrian, Miró, and Picasso, is reassuring evidence that fine art still lives. (Open daily, except Thursdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway—More than seventy paintings, watercolors, drawings, and prints by Paul Klee (1879-1940). . . . ¶ "Singular Dimensions in Painting," an exhibit of minimalist work, primarily from the fifties and sixties. . . . ¶ A site-specific installation by Rebecca Horn. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday through Saturday evenings until 8.)



Socrates Sculpture Park.

BARRY MUNGER

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Hand-Painted Pop" includes early works by Rauschenberg, Johns, Warhol, and Rosenquist as well as less well known artists, such as Jean Follett and Jess. . . . ¶ "In the Spirit of Fluxus," a carefully thought-out and handsomely installed exhibition of art and *incunabula by the* far-flung practitioners of this international neo-Dada non-movement. . . . ¶ "Hopper in Paris" consists of twenty-five works that Hopper painted in the early nineteen-hundreds. Through Sept. 19. . . . ¶ "The Subject of Rape," an installation that examines rape in art, history, law, and the media. Through Aug. 29. . . . ¶ "Abject Art." Through Aug. 29. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"The Hall of Human Biology and Evolution," a new permanent exhibition. . . . ¶ "The Dinosaurs of Jurassic Park" features several life-size props created for Steven Spielberg, including a Tyrannosaurus rex, a triceratops, and a velociraptor. Through Sept. 12. . . . ¶ "Bears: *Imagination and Reality*." . . . ¶ *More than fifty* color photographs examining "The Pantanal: Brazil's Forgotten Wilderness," a floodplain "the size of Wyoming," home to rare and endangered animal and plant species. Through Aug. 29. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"The Second Dimension: Twentieth-Century Sculptors' Drawings." More than seventy-five works from the museum's permanent collection, including figure drawings by Louise Nevelson and Isamu Noguchi. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—"John Cage: Edible Drawings." Taste aside, this small show of works on paper by the late great composer is wonderful. Handmade paper became a cliché in the seventies for any *would-be creative person with a blender and* some scraps of cotton, but in his last few years Cage made three "suites" of such work out of health food: macrobiotic ingredients like Hijiki seaweed and bitter melon, wild plants, and medicines from a Chinatown herbalist. Cage devised recipes using the "I Ching," and the pitted and veined results are quite lovely and delicate. They tap into the metaphor of art as nourishment, with a dose of Fluxus irreverence. . . . ¶ "Gertrud and Otto Natzler." . . . ¶ Work by ceramist Paul Soldner. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—"Mechanical Brides: Women and Machines from Home to Office." Starts Aug. 17. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 *to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.*)

Jewish Museum, 1109 Fifth Ave., at 92nd St.—"From the Inside Out" showcases eight contemporary international artists, including Christian Boltanski and Nancy Spero. . . . ¶ Prints, drawings, and other works on paper in "Collecting for the Twenty-first Century: Recent Acquisitions and Promised Gifts." Through Sept. 12. (Open Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 11 to 5:45; Tuesdays, 11 to 8, with no admission charge after 5.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—"A Great Legacy: Morgan Collections, 1913-43" presents J. P. Morgan, Jr.,'s acquisitions, including medieval and Renaissance manuscripts; Gutenberg and Caxton incunabula; autograph letters by Austen, Locke, and Balzac; Rembrandt prints; and much more. Through Aug. 15. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Museum for African Art, 593 Broadway—"Home and the World: Architectural Sculpture by Aboudramane and Bodys Isek Kingelez." Aboudramane, who hails from the Ivory Coast but lives in Paris, creates bright-colored, often fantastical structures—one of his buildings has horns. Kingelez, who is from Zaire, combines urban African design with international architecture. Through Sept. 26. . . . ¶ "Secrecy: African Art That Conceals and Reveals." Through Aug. 22. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 11 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 11 to 8.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"American Treasures." Nineteenth-century paintings from the museum's permanent collection. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5; Friday evenings until 8, with no admission charge after 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"Flora Photographica: The Flower in Photography from 1835 to the Present." Through Aug. 21. (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5:45.)

New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center—The library devotes its entire space to "Jazz," featuring more than four hundred original scores and arrangements, rare manuscripts, film footage, photographs from the forties to the sixties, and radio broadcasts from the thirties. Through Sept. 30. (Open Mondays and Thursdays, noon to 8; Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, noon to 6.)

Queens Museum of Art, Flushing Meadow Park—"Ante América" (Regarding America) features work in mixed mediums by more than twenty African, Caribbean, and Native American artists. . . . ¶ Eight drawings, one sculpture, and a fifty-foot mural by Keith Haring. Through Aug. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

OTHER VENUES

Socrates Sculpture Park—The work of fifty New York artists is on display in the biggest show ever at this riverfront lot in Long Island City, approximately across the East River from Gracie Mansion. The work ranges from sinister (Itty Neuhaus's black net draped over street lights) to sly (Gregg LeFevre's gourds hanging in a tree) to outright funny (Kurt Novak's giant pink mama kangaroo). Antoinette Ayres' ten-foot-high beehive tomb, coated inside with beeswax and redolent of honey, is a neighborhood favorite. The structural-steel sculptures of the park's founder, Mark di Suvero, anchor it all against the Manhattan skyline. (Vernon Boulevard at Broadway.)

Storm King Art Center—The center this year celebrates the acquisition of Siah Armajani's "Gazebo for Two Anarchists: Gabriella Antolini and Alberto Antolini." Visitors can perch on the huge steel sculpture's open bridge, overlooking a gully, or gaze out at the hills from two cell-like gazebos. Massive abstract steel sculptures by Menashe Kadishman, Mark di Suvero, and Richard Serra, among others, dominate the four hundred acres of woods, hills, and gardens. Isamu Noguchi's brilliant "Momo Taro," forty tons of granite perfectly placed on the grassy cap of a smooth hill, is reason enough to visit. (Mountainville, New York. 1-914 534-3115. Open daily, 11 to 5:30.)

Wave Hill—With its river view and groves of grand, sheltering trees, this twenty-eight-acre public garden is an ideal setting for dance and performance events, and for the sculptures of Robert Ressler. Ressler works in trees, so to speak—his lacquered-wood sculptures are made from trees cut down and given to him by the New York City Parks Department. A recurrent form has a bulbous base and a truncated, forked, or mushroom-shaped top. Two animal sculptures come as a surprise: "In Search of the New World" is a droopy-eared dog with prominent teats and the stance of a wooden horse; "Armadillo" is a highly stylized critter with glass eyes and a commanding tail. . . . ¶ Indoors, in the Glyndor Gallery, is an exhibition of botanical illustrations by Francesca Anderson, which are as finely drawn and detailed as Old Master drawings of the same subject—you want to take them home. (675 W. 252nd St., the Bronx. Tuesdays through Sundays, 9 to 5:30, and Wednesday evenings until 8.)

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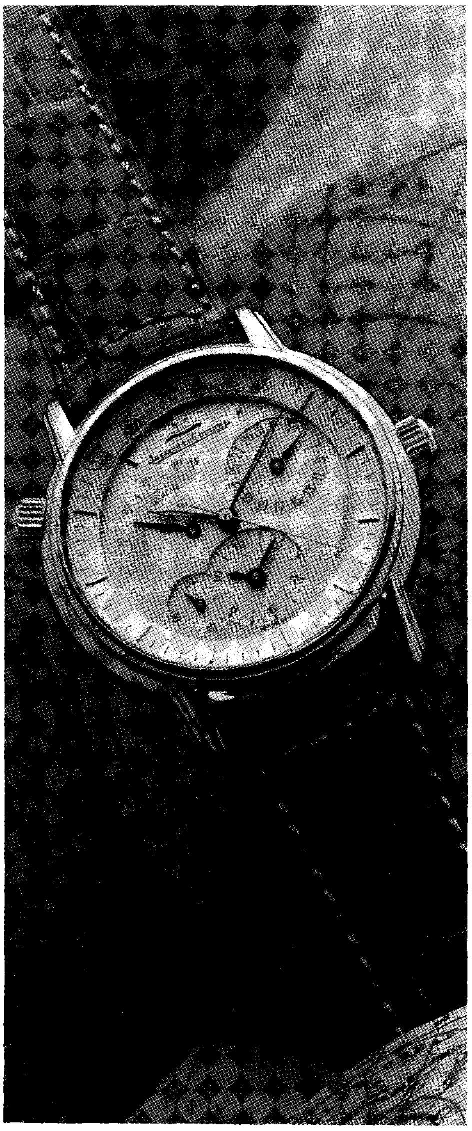

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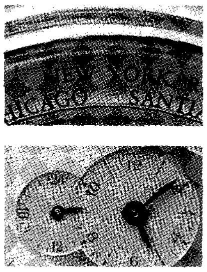

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PHOTOGRAPHY

The Shadow

FOR certain people, the name Rudy Burckhardt sums up an era when being a New York artist meant being a true bohemian. Burckhardt's long involvement with art—he was born in 1914—has encompassed many mediums, but his paintings, films, and photographs show up only sporadically at this point. At the Brooke Alexander Gallery (59 Wooster Street), an exhibition of about forty of his photographs, mostly from the thirties, forties, and fifties, is worth a visit. (It comes down at the end of this week.)

Burckhardt's shots of Manhattan's skyline, skyscrapers, water towers, smokestacks, brick walls, etc., are not picturesque clichés—they're grittier than that, smokier, as it were. They have a definite personal quality, as do his multiple images of people on the street, which capture a slice of the urban beat, like stills from a homemade movie. Stronger than his still-lifes or his more conceptual images, which are a mite too composed, the city pictures are curiously affecting, as though they were seen through the eyes of someone who came here for a life that wasn't possible elsewhere. Burckhardt's 1947 image of the Flatiron Building on Fifth Avenue, the building that has been such a magnet for photographers, is a particular beaut. The enormous shadow the skinny building casts on the street is as soothing as a dark, cool lake.

Margaret Morton/Skeet McAuley—Morton's black-and-white photographs of shanties in New York capture the architectural resourcefulness of the men and women who built them. In her pictures, rubble and discarded wood can be as powerful as marble. / McAuley takes huge color shots of oasis-like golf courses in the arid Southwest. Through Sept. 4. (Lowinsky, 575 Broadway.)

Minayoshi Takada—Twenty-six lushly textured vintage prints from 1947 to 1950. Through Sept. 10. (Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.)

International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St.—"Outside the Dream: Child Poverty in America." Seventy black-and-white works by photojournalist Stephen Shames. . . . ¶ Collaborative Polaroids by artists and teen-agers from New York City. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St.—Opening-night, backstage, and production shots since 1893, celebrating Broadway's hundredth anniversary. Playwrights, stars, and composers include Tennessee Williams, Al Jolson, Fred Astaire, and George Gershwin. . . . ¶ Fifty photographs by Rick Smolan that incorporate advanced interactive digital technology to document a journey through the Australian outback. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**NEELON CRAWFORD:** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Through Aug. 27. . . . **FRANÇOIS KOLLAR:** Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through Sept. 18.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, the American Museum of Natural History, the New York Public Library, and the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.)

MUSIC

Summer School

THE annual Bard Music Festival is valuable in many well-recognized ways, and its examination of a single composer from multiple musical and intellectual standpoints is always useful. This summer it's Dvořák, a good subject for a period of fractured cultural politics. Dvořák's pan-Slavic view of his own heritage stands in edifying contrast to the current ethnic fragmentation of his home region (he was Bohemian but helped himself to Polish, Ruthenian, and Slovak folk music, among others). Moreover, he visited America and immediately saw that its musical future was multicultural. He told our Eurocentric musicians, "I am satisfied that the future music of this country must be founded on what are called the Negro melodies. These can be the foundation of a serious and original school of composition."

A century later, classically trained composers and popular taste are reapproaching one another in music linked, by debt or kinship, with the African-American-derived genres of rock and jazz. Minimalists like John Adams and Philip Glass, "downtown" eclectic composers like John Zorn, and genre-crossers like Anthony Davis—however unimaginable their idioms would have been to Dvořák—are realizing his proposition. That this has happened despite polarization and dislocation only underlines the prescience of the original insight: artistic handling of ethnically specific materials need not be ethnically determined. There is plenty for the academic community to consider in just this strand of Dvořák's makeup.

IN TOWN—OPERA

New York City Opera—**LA BOHÈME,** with Eva Zseller dying of consumption; conducted by Karen Keltner. (Aug. 11 at 8.) . . . **CARMEN,** with Sharon Graham taking the knife; conducted by Joseph Colaneri. (Aug. 13 at 8.) . . . **TOSCA,** with Elizabeth Holleque taking the plunge; conducted by Steven Sloane. (Aug. 14 at 1:30.) . . . **THE STUDENT PRINCE,** by Sigmund Romberg. Sorry, no deaths. (Aug. 14 and Aug. 17 at 8, and Aug. 15 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

IN TOWN—ORCHESTRAS

Mostly Mozart Festival—Aug. 11: George Cleve conducts the Festival Orchestra in Haydn's Symphony No. 93 and Violin Concerto No. (with Gil Shaham) and Mozart's Symphony No. 36 (the "Linz") and A-Major Piano Concerto (K. 488, with Horacio Gutiérrez). . . . ¶ Aug. 12: Soprano Harolyn Blackwell joins members of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in Schubert's "Der Hirt auf dem Felsen" and a group of Haydn's folk-song settings; the instrumentalists will also render a Haydn trio and Mozart's Clarinet Quintet. . . . ¶ Aug. 13-14: George Cleve conducts the Festival Orchestra in Haydn's Symphony No. 104 and "Overture to an English Opera," as well as Mozart's Flute Concerto No. 1 (with Jean-Pierre Rampal) and C-Major Piano Concerto (K. 503, with Imogen Cooper). . . . ¶ Aug. 16: The Beaux

Arts Trio plays three masterpieces of Viennese classicism: trios by Mozart (in B-Flat, K. 502), Beethoven (the "Ghost"), and Schubert (in E-Flat, D. 929). . . . ¶ Aug. 17: Gerard Schwarz conducts the Festival Orchestra in Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony, Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4 (featuring Eugene Istomin), and Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 2 (with Cho-Liang Lin) and Symphony No. 35 (the "Haffner"). (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Evenings at 8.)

SILKS AND RAGS CONCERT BAND—Daniel Paget leads selections from Joplin's "Treemonisha," among other ragtimes. (Rockwood Drive Circle, Van Cortlandt Park, the Bronx. Aug. 15 at 2. . . . ¶ McGinley Center, Fordham University, Bronx Rose Hill Campus. Aug. 15 at 4. No tickets necessary for either concert.)

IN TOWN—RECITALS

BARGEMUSIC—Pianists Carol Archer and Mihae Lee team up for four-hand music by Schubert (his F-Minor Fantasie) and Brahms (some Hungarian Dances). Astor Piazzolla's Tango (for cello and piano) and Dvořák's "Dumky" Trio round out the program, with the participation of violinist Nai-Yuan Hu and cellist Fred Sherry. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Aug. 12 at 7:30 and Aug. 15 at 4.)

SUMMERGARDEN—Pianists Shu-Ching Chen and Ju-Ying Song (both of whom are doctoral candidates at Juilliard) perform works for solo piano and piano, four hands, as part of the Museum of Modern Art's twentieth-century Latin-American festival. On the program are works by a Mexican (Arturo Márquez), an Uruguayan (Miguel del Aguila), two Argentinians (Osvaldo Golijov and Carlos Guastavino), and three Brazilians (Radamés Gnattali, Paolo Costa Lima, and the providentially named Mozart Camargo Guarnieri). (Sculpture Garden, 14 W. 54th St. Aug. 13-14 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

Simon Rattle directing Haydn's "The Creation" at Tanglewood.

J.W. STEWART

OUT OF TOWN

TANGLEWOOD—Aug. 11 at 8:30: William Christie directs Les Arts Florissants in Purcell's "Dido and Aeneas" and Charpentier's "Actéon.". . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 8:30: Evgeny Kissin performs Prokofiev's Piano Sonata No. 4 and several of Rachmaninoff's preludes; colleagues join him in Schubert's "Trout" Quintet. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 8:30: Charles Dutoit conducts the Boston Symphony in Rachmaninoff's "Capriccio Bohémien," Mozart's D-Minor Piano Concerto (with Alicia de Larrocha), and Brahms' Symphony No. 1. . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 8:30: Zubin Mehta conducts the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra in Brahms' "Variations on a Theme by Haydn," Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra, and Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante in E-Flat (K. 364, featuring violinist Itzhak Perlman and violist Pinchas Zukerman). . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 2:30: Simon Rattle conducts Haydn's "The Creation," with the Boston Symphony, the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, and soloists Barbara Bonney (soprano), Robert Tear (tenor), and David Thomas (bass). (Lenox, Mass. For information about tickets, call 1-413 637-1940.)

CARAMOOR MUSIC FESTIVAL—Aug. 12 at 4:15: Andrew Armstrong, who was awarded the Jury's Discretionary Prize recently at the Ninth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, performs Beethoven's Sonata No. 22 (in F Major, Op. 54), Ravel's "Le Tombeau de Couperin," and several works by Chopin (including his G-Minor Ballade). . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 8:30: Members of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center play chamber works by Dvořák, Dohnányi, and Franck (his Piano Quintet). . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 8:30: Jazz, from the Gerry Mulligan quartet. . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 5:30: Members of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center perform Brahms' Clarinet Trio, Mendelssohn's Cello Sonata No. 2, and Beethoven's "Archduke" Trio. (Katonah, N.Y. 1-914 232-1252.)

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA—Final performances of the season. "Werther." (Aug. 12 at 8 and Aug. 15 at 2.) . . . ¶ "Le Comte Ory." (Aug. 13 at 8 and Aug. 16 at 2.) . . . ¶ "Così fan Tutte." (Aug. 14 at 8.) (Cooperstown, N.Y. For information about tickets, call 1-607 547-2255. English supertitles at all performances.)

BARD MUSIC FESTIVAL—The first of two Dvořák weekends, with lectures and panel discussions interspersed among the concerts. Aug. 13 at 8: Vocal and chamber works by Dvořák and his son-in-law, Josef Suk. . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 12:30: String sextets by Dvořák (in A Major, Op. 48) and Brahms (in B-Flat, Op. 18). . . . At 3:30: Chamber music by Dvořák, Suk, Zdenek Fibich, and Janáček. . . . At 8: Leon Botstein conducts the American Symphony Orchestra in works by Vitezslav Novak, Karel Bendl, Suk, and Dvořák (including his Symphony No. 6). . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 12:30: Melodramas (that is, musically accompanied recitations, here rendered in English) by Smetana, Fibich, and J. B. Foerster, with speaker Jan Triska and pianist Diane Walsh. . . . At 2: Early songs and chamber music by Dvořák. . . . At 5: Chamber works by Dvořák, Ives, and Janáček, featuring pianist Rudolf Firkušný and colleagues. (Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson. For information about tickets, call 1-914 758-7559.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS—Graduating from the Milan Conservatory in 1839, Giovanni Bottesini won acclaim as the world's greatest double-bass virtuoso. Demand for double-bass soloists being what it was (and is), Bottesini also polished his skills as a conductor—so well, in fact, that Verdi had him conduct the world première of "Aida," in Cairo, in 1871. This set a precedent for several future bassists-turned-conductors, including Serge Koussevitzky (who, in his early years, was called "the Russian Bottesini") and—closer to home—Zubin Mehta, who has been known to wield a reasonably mean bow. Since little repertoire existed for his instrument, Bottesini wrote prolifically for his own use, and many of his pieces still turn up on the music stands of accomplished bassists. In this concert, bassist James Vandermark will provide the greater profundity in Bottesini's Duo for Cello and Double Bass, and will similarly underscore Schubert's "Trout" Quintet (in which he will be joined by violinist Stephanie Chase and the Cremona Trio). Those who prefer their pitches high will find consola-

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MUSIC—Cont'd

tion in soprano Rosemarie Freni, who will offer songs by Schubert, including "Die Forelle," on which the quintet's fourth-movement variations are based. (Woodstock, N.Y. Aug. 15 at 3. For information about tickets, call 1-914 679-8217.)

JAZZ/POP/ROCK PERSONAL APPEARANCES

"Inspirations"—The series at the Brooklyn Museum continues. Anthony Davis has played the maximalist for so long—composing opera ("X, The Life and Times of Malcom X") and leading his large new-music ensemble Episteme—that his triumphs as a jazz pianist are rapidly receding into the mist. This rare solo performance should restore to mind the late-seventies Davis, an exacting formalist whose improvisations could pass as virgin compositions. Davis will use the solitude to ruminate on Thelonious Monk, examining how that most individual of pianist-songwriters informs Davis's own uncommon work. (Frieda Schiff Warburg Memorial Sculpture Garden, Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway. Aug. 15 at 3. Tickets at the museum on the day of the concert.)

Tom Zé—This fifty-seven-year-old Brazilian singer-songwriter is an immensely gifted composer and performer, whose concert earlier this summer in Central Park was a delight. His melodic sense is unerring, but he also has a daring gift for sonic experimentation that sends his songs veering in unexpected directions. This show will place him, appropriately, near the MOMA galleries that are currently full of eclectic and surprising Latin-American art. (Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. 708-9500. Aug. 12 at 7 and 9.)

Pete Townshend—Jones Beach Theatre. 1-516 221-1000. Aug. 12 at 8.

Millie Jocelyn y Los Vecinos—¡Merengue! (South Street Seaport, Pier 16, East River at Fulton St. Aug. 12 at 5:30. No tickets necessary.)

Def Leppard—With Ugly Kid Joe. (Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 13-14 at 8.)

"Sounds at Sunset"—A series of concerts saluting Broadway. This one features the music of Kander & Ebb and Jerry Herman. The singers include Alix Korey and Nancy LaMott. (Hudson River Park Pavilion. Aug. 17 at 6:30. No tickets necessary.)

Jimmy Buffett—Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 17-18 at 8.

Ellington '93—A conference centered on the Duke, including a couple of concerts open to the public. Aug. 12 at 8: Kenny Burrell, Rufus Reid, Barbara Lea, Ellis Larkins, and the Ellington '93 small band, featuring Louie Bellson and conducted by Loren Schoenberg. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 8: The Ellington '93 big band, featuring Mr. Bellson and Joya Sherrill, and conducted by Mr. Schoenberg. (Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, Broadway at 49th St. For information about tickets and seminars, call 1-800 988-7473.)

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Yankees—Vs. the Baltimore Orioles, Aug. 13 at 7:30, Aug. 14 (Reggie Jackson Day) and Aug. 15 at 1:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Texas Rangers, Aug. 16-17 at 7:30.

Mets—Vs. the Atlanta Braves, Aug. 11-12 at 7:40.

(The Yankees play at Yankee Stadium, 1-718 293-6000, and the Mets play at Shea Stadium, 1-718 507-8499.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival—The festival will officially get under way on Aug. 12 at noon, at the Winter Garden of the World Financial Center, when eyes are painted on the thirty-nine-foot dragon boats to awaken their spirits. On Aug. 15, from noon to 4, twelve teams of twenty paddlers will participate in a half-mile-long regatta beginning at the North Cove of Battery Park City. Each boat will carry a drummer and a steersperson. In addition, on Aug. 12-15, from 11 to 6, there will be a Hong Kong village set up in the Winter Garden, featuring exhibitions of traditional Chinese cooking, martial arts, dances, and crafts.

Currying Flavors—The Caribbean Food Festival and Tasting Contest will take place on Aug. 15, from 1 to 6, in Prospect Park. There will also be calypso, soca, and reggae performances. (Nethermead, Lincoln and Ocean Aves. entrance. No tickets necessary.)

Shine On—The Perseid meteor showers, on Aug. 11-12, are expected to reach a once-in-a-lifetime peak: thousands (as opposed to the usual hundreds) of meteors per hour. The phenomenon is the result of the recent passage of the Swift-Tuttle Comet through the inner solar system. According to Jeff Kanipe, of the University of Texas at Austin McDonald Observatory, "The comet is like one of those snow-encrusted cars that you see in wintertime barrelling down the freeway and leaving a cloud of ice and snow behind." When Earth passes through its trail, Swift-Tuttle will send us this blitz of shooting stars. Mr. Kanipe advises New Yorkers to start skygazing as soon as it gets dark on the night of Aug. 11; look for the greatest activity after midnight. And if you can get to the country—city lights will dim the display—all the better.

Art for Food's Sake—The downtown troops are rallying to support the Good Food Co-op. Performers will include Taylor Mead, Jennifer Blowdryer, Penny Arcade, and Allen Ginsberg. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. Aug. 11, from 7 to 10. Tickets at the door on the evening of the benefit.)

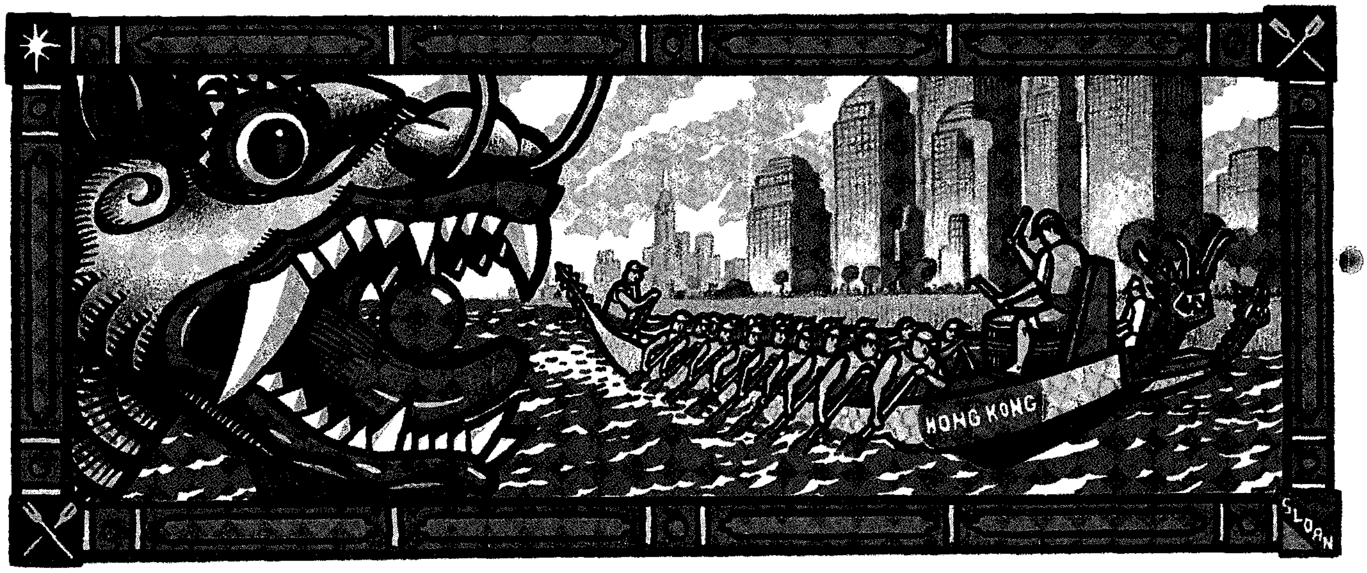
Open Air—Some of the smaller theatre groups are offering free alfresco productions. Following the success of its Washington Square Park production of "As You Like It," Rakka-Thamm! moves to the W. 10th St. pier for a production of Julie Bovasso's "Down by the River Where Waterlilies Are Disfigured Every Day." (Thursdays through Sundays at 7:30. Through Sept. 5.) . . . ¶ The Grass Roots Shakespeare Troupe will present "Twelfth Night." (Central Park, Fifth Ave. and 69th St. entrance. Aug. 13-15 at 3.) . . . ¶ Gorilla Rep will present its annual "A Midsummer Night's Dream" in the southwest corner of Washington Square Park. (Saturdays and Sundays at 8. Through Aug. 29.)

Tomb Tunes—The Jazzmobile will be parked at Grant's Tomb, with Jimmy Heath and Slide Hampton aboard on Aug. 11. A maze of ethnic-food and crafts venders will set up for business within earshot. (Riverside Dr. at 122nd St. Wednesdays, from 7 to 9. Through Sept. 1. No tickets necessary.)

Plaza Performances—Lincoln Center continues its annual Out-of-Doors series. A partial schedule: Aug. 11 at 8:15: Montréal Danse. . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 6:30: The Soldier String Quartet. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 6:30: Guitars play Mingus. . . . At 8:15: Mingus Big Band. . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 7:30: Pete Seeger. . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 7:30: A country dance party with the Jackson Pike Skifflers. . . . ¶ Aug. 17 at 6:30: The Angelic Gospel Singers. . . . At 8:15: Philadanco. (All events will take place in the environs of Lincoln Center. 875-5400. Through Aug. 24. No tickets necessary.)

Readings—Aug. 17 at 7: Aga Shahid Ali and Thomas Bolt will read from their own work. (Limbo, 47 Avenue A, at 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Aug. 17 at 9:30: Maggie Estep and Amy Hempel, among several others, will read "Letters from Everywhere." (Fez at Time Café, 380 Lafayette St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.)

Tours & Walks—Aug. 11 at 3: A behind-the-scenes look at the Rainbow Room, sponsored by the 92nd Street Y. For more information, call 996-1100. . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at noon and 2:30: Big Onion Walking Tours will guide visitors around Govenors Island. For more information, call 439-1090.



Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival.

MICHAEL SLOAN

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			11	12	13	14
15	16	17				

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN "MOVIES IN BRIEF," STARTING ON PAGE 19.

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: "Amongst Friends" (†).
Theatre 2: "Much Ado About Nothing" (directed by Kenneth Branagh).
Theatre 3: "Orlando" (Sally Potter).
Theatre 4: Through Aug. 12: "Strictly Ballroom" (Baz Luhrmann). From Aug. 13: "Especially on Sunday" (Marco Tullio Giordana, Giuseppe Bertolucci, and Giuseppe Tornatore; in Italian).
Theatre 5: "Like Water for Chocolate" (Alfonso Arau, in Spanish).
Theatre 6: "The Wedding Banquet" (Ang Lee).

Little Theatre, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Through Aug. 12: "Where Are We? Our Trip Through America" (Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman).
From Aug. 13: Theatre closed.

Newman Theatre, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Through Aug. 12: A program of Italian films.
From Aug. 13: Theatre closed.

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: "Sleepless in Seattle" (†).
Theatre 2: "Robin Hood: Men in Tights" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Aug. 12: "Sleepless in Seattle" (†). From Aug. 13: "The Secret Garden" (Agnieszka Holland).

Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)
Theatre 1: "The Fugitive" (†).
Theatre 2: "Searching for Bobby Fischer" (Steven Zaillian).
Theatre 3: "My Boyfriend's Back" (Bob Balaban), with Andrew Lowery.
Theatre 4: "The Fugitive" (†).
Theatre 5: "In the Line of Fire" (†).
Theatre 6: (Matinées only) "Free Willy" (Simon Wincer); and (evenings only) "In the Line of Fire" (†).
Theatre 7: "Tom and Jerry—The Movie" (Phil Roman), an animated film; and "So I Married an Axe Murderer" (†).

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)
"Tokyo Decadence" (Ryu Murakami).

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)
Theatre 1: "Un Coeur en Hiver" (Claude Sautet, in French).
Theatre 2: "Boys' Shorts: The New Queer Cinema," a program of six short films.
Theatre 3: "Being at Home with Claude" (Jean Boudin; in French).
Theatre 4: Through Aug. 12: (Matinées only) "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" (1937); and (evenings only) "The Story of Qiu Ju" (Zhang Yimou; in Mandarin). From Aug. 13: "Twist" (Ron Mann), a documentary.
Theatre 5: "Hocus Pocus" (Kenny Ortega).
Theatre 6: "The Meteor Man" (Robert Townsend), with Townsend.
Theatre 7: "Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me" (Joel Hershman).

19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: "The Fugitive" (†).
Theatre 2: "Sleepless in Seattle" (†).
Theatre 3: "Poetic Justice" (†).
Theatre 4: "The Firm" (†).
Theatre 5: "Coneheads" (†).
Theatre 6: "The Fugitive" (†).

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
"In the Line of Fire" (†).

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Theatre 1: "So I Married an Axe Murderer" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Meteor Man" (Robert Townsend), with Townsend.
Theatre 3: "My Boyfriend's Back" (Bob Balaban), with Andrew Lowery.
Theatre 4: "Poetic Justice" (†).

34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "Coneheads" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Firm" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Fugitive" (†).

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"Robin Hood: Men in Tights" (†).

Eastside Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
"Like Water for Chocolate" (Alfonso Arau, in Spanish).

Sutton 1 and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: "My Boyfriend's Back" (Bob Balaban), with Andrew Lowery.
Theatre 2: "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" (1937); and "Menace II Society" (Allen and Albert Hughes).

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
"Robin Hood: Men in Tights" (†).

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"Rookie of the Year" (Daniel Stern).

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "Poetic Justice" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Meteor Man" (Robert Townsend), with Townsend.

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"Tom and Jerry—The Movie" (Phil Roman); and "Another Stakeout" (John Badham).

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: "Rising Sun" (†).
Theatre 2: "Rising Sun" (†).

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: "That Night" (Craig Bolotin), with Juliette Lewis and C. Thomas Howell.
Theatre 2: "What's Love Got to Do with It" (Brian Gibson).
Theatre 3: "House of Angels" (Colin Nutley, in Swedish).

Art East Cinema, 1st Ave. at 61st. (644-1111)
Through Aug. 12: "Dave" (Ivan Reitman).
From Aug. 13: To be announced.

First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd. (752-4600)
Theatre 1: "Jurassic Park" (†).
Theatre 2: "Much Ado About Nothing" (Kenneth Branagh).
Theatre 3: "The Wedding Banquet" (Ang Lee).
Theatre 4: "Coneheads" (†).
Theatre 5: "So I Married an Axe Murderer" (†).
Theatre 6: "So I Married an Axe Murderer" (†).

Gemini 1 and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: "The Fugitive" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Fugitive" (†).

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"Sleepless in Seattle" (†).

New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "In the Line of Fire" (†).
Theatre 2: "Searching for Bobby Fischer" (Steven Zaillian).

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"Amongst Friends" (†).

Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"The Firm" (†).

East 85th Street, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
"The Firm" (†).

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: "Jurassic Park" (†).
Theatre 2: "In the Line of Fire" (†).

Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (876-2400)
Theatre 1: "My Boyfriend's Back" (Bob Balaban), with Andrew Lowery.
Theatre 2: "Sleepless in Seattle" (†).
Theatre 3: "Rising Sun" (†).
Theatre 4: (Matinées only) "Free Willy" (Simon Wincer); and (evenings only) "The Fugitive" (†).
Theatre 5: "The Fugitive" (†).
Theatre 6: (Matinées only) "Tom and Jerry—The Movie" (Phil Roman); and (evenings only) "So I Married an Axe Murderer" (†).
Theatre 7: "Poetic Justice" (†).

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: "The Meteor Man" (Robert Townsend), with Townsend.
Theatre 2: "Hocus Pocus" (Kenny Ortega).

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: "Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives" (directed by Aerlyn Weissman and Lynne Fernie).
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: "La Vie de Bohème" (†).

Waverly 1 and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: "Coneheads" (†).
Theatre 2: "Poetic Justice" (†).

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "Jurassic Park" (†).
Theatre 2: "Rising Sun" (†).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: "From Hollywood to Hanoi" (Tiana Thi Thanh Nga; in English, French, and Vietnamese), a documentary.
Theatre 2: "Road Scholar" (Roger Weisberg).
Theatre 3: "For a Lost Soldier" (Roeland Kerbosch, in Dutch).
Theatre 4: "Jacquot" (Agnès Varda; in French).

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "The Meteor Man" (Robert Townsend), with Townsend.
Theatre 2: "Jurassic Park" (†).
Theatre 3: "Free Willy" (Simon Wincer).
Theatre 4: "Rising Sun" (†).
Theatre 5: "In the Line of Fire" (†).
Theatre 6: "So I Married an Axe Murderer" (†).
Theatre 7: "Rising Sun" (†).
Theatre 8: "Robin Hood: Men in Tights" (†).
Theatre 9: "In the Line of Fire" (†).

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: "My Boyfriend's Back" (Bob Balaban), with Andrew Lowery.
Theatre 2: "Tom and Jerry—The Movie" (Phil Roman); and "Hocus Pocus" (Kenny Ortega).
Theatre 3: "What's Love Got to Do with It" (Brian Gibson).

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"In the Line of Fire" (†).

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: "Menace II Society" (Allen and Albert Hughes).
Theatre 2: "Rookie of the Year" (Daniel Stern).
Theatre 3: "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" (1937); and "Another Stakeout" (John Badham).
Theatre 4: "Dave" (Ivan Reitman).
Theatre 5: "Indochine" (Régis Wargnier, in French), with Catherine Deneuve.
Theatre 6: "Tom and Jerry—The Movie" (Phil Roman); and "Cliffhanger" (Renny Harlin).

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
"Jurassic Park" (†).

Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
Through Aug. 12: (Matinées only) "Tom and Jerry—The Movie" (Phil Roman); and (evenings only) "So I Married an Axe Murderer" (†).
From Aug. 13: "Especially on Sunday" (Marco Tullio Giordana, Giuseppe Bertolucci, and Giuseppe Tornatore; in Italian).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
"What's Love Got to Do with It" (Brian Gibson).

Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
Theatre 1: "Road Scholar" (Roger Weisberg).
Theatre 2: "Like Water for Chocolate" (Alfonso Arau, in Spanish).

Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th. (586-1900)
"Amongst Friends" (†).

Paris, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
"The Music of Chance" (Philip Haas).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
"Strictly Ballroom" (Baz Luhrmann).

Columbus Circle, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"My Boyfriend's Back" (Bob Balaban).

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
"In the Line of Fire" (†).

Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "Much Ado About Nothing" (Kenneth Branagh).
Theatre 2: "Orlando" (Sally Potter).
Theatre 3: "Orlando."
Theatre 4: "The Wedding Banquet" (Ang Lee).
Theatre 5: "Guelwaar" (Ousmane Sembène; in French and Wolof).
Theatre 6: "Un Coeur en Hiver" (Claude Sautet, in French).

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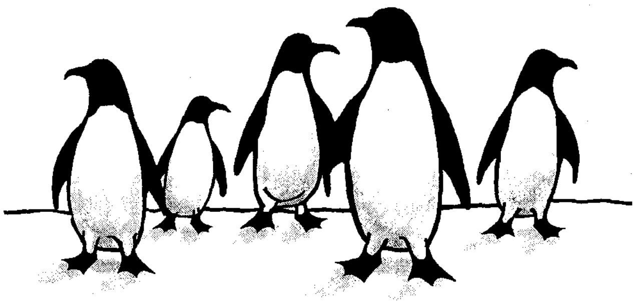

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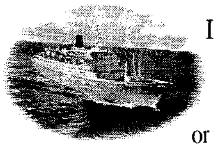

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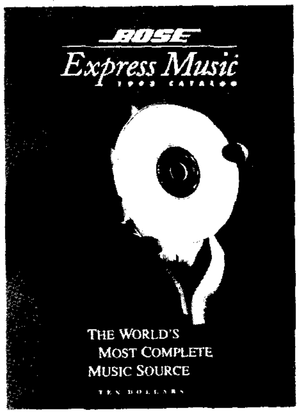

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MOVIE HOUSES–Cont'd

REGENCY, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"Rising Sun" (†).

84TH STREET SIXPLEX, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: "Poetic Justice" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Fugitive" (†).
Theatre 3: "Sleepless in Seattle" (†).
Theatre 4: "Searching for Bobby Fischer" (Steven Zaillian), with Joe Mantegna and Laurence Fishburne.
Theatre 5: "The Firm" (†).
Theatre 6: "Free Willy" (Simon Wincer); and "The Fugitive" (†).

METRO CINEMA 1 AND 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "Robin Hood: Men in Tights" (†).
Theatre 2: "Jurassic Park" (†).

OLYMPIA I AND II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: "Tom and Jerry—The Movie" (Phil Roman); and "Another Stakeout" (John Badham).
Theatre 2: "The Meteor Man" (Robert Townsend), with Townsend.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

CRITERION CENTER, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "The Meteor Man" (directed by Robert Townsend), with Townsend.
Theatre 2: "Free Willy" (Simon Wincer).
Theatre 3: "The Meteor Man."
Theatre 4: Through Aug. 12: "Sleepless in Seattle" (†). From Aug. 13: "Jason Goes to Hell: The Final Friday" (Adam Marcus).
Theatre 5: "The Fugitive" (†).
Theatre 6: "Rising Sun" (†).
Theatre 7: "Rising Sun" (†).

EMBASSY 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
"My Boyfriend's Back" (Bob Balaban).

EMBASSY 2, 3, AND 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 1: "In the Line of Fire" (†).
Theatre 2: "Coneheads" (†).
Theatre 3: "What's Love Got to Do With It" (Brian Gibson).

ASTOR PLAZA, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
"The Firm" (†).

NATIONAL TWIN, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: "Poetic Justice" (†).
Theatre 2: "Robin Hood: Men in Tights" (†).

REVIVAL HOUSES

FILM FORUM 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Through Aug. 14: "Advise and Consent" (†).
Aug. 15-17: "Saint Joan" (1957, directed by Otto Preminger), with Jean Seberg.

GRAMERCY, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
Through Aug. 14: "A Place in the Sun" (1951, George Stevens), with Montgomery Clift, Elizabeth Taylor, and Shelley Winters; and "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" (1958, Richard Brooks), with Taylor, Paul Newman, and Burl Ives.
From Aug. 15: "The Sandpiper" (†); and "The V.I.P.s" (1963, Anthony Asquith), with Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton.

THALIA, B'way at 95th. (316-4962)
Aug. 11: "Swamp Water" (1941, Jean Renoir), with Dana Andrews, Walter Brennan, Anne Baxter, and Walter Huston; and "The Southerner" (1945, Renoir), with Zachary Scott and Betty Field.
From Aug. 12: To be announced.

THEATRE 80 ST. MARKS, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
Aug. 11: "Play Misty for Me" (1971, Clint Eastwood), with Eastwood and Jessica Walter; and "Thunderbolt and Lightfoot" (1974, Michael Cimino), with Eastwood, Jeff Bridges, George Kennedy, and Geoffrey Lewis.
Aug. 12: "The Last Detail" (1974, Hal Ashby), with Jack Nicholson, Otis Young, and Randy Quaid; and "The Fortune" (1975, Mike Nichols), with Warren Beatty and Nicholson.
Aug. 13-14: "Wuthering Heights" (1939, William Wyler), with Merle Oberon and Laurence Olivier; and "Jane Eyre" (1944, Robert Stevenson), with Joan Fontaine and Orson Welles.
Aug. 15: "Play It Again, Sam" (1972, Herbert Ross), with Woody Allen; and "Broadway Danny Rose" (1984, Woody Allen), with Allen and Mia Farrow.
Aug. 16: "Love and Anarchy" (†); and "All Screwed Up" (1974, Lina Wertmüller; in Italian).

Michael Wadleigh, Martin Scorsese, and Thelma Schoonmaker during the filming of "Woodstock."

MOVIE STILL ARCHIVES

Aug. 17: "Fahrenheit 451" (1966, François Truffaut), with Julie Christie and Oskar Werner; and "Silent Running" (1972, Douglas Trumbill), with Bruce Dern.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films from Mexico and other Latin-American countries; and three films by Blake Edwards.

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. (875-5600)—A program of films about baseball.

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—Aug. 14 at 4 and Aug. 15 at 2 and 4:30: Three different programs of films by George Kuchar.... ¶ Aug. 14 at 2: "One Million B.C." (1940, Hal Roach and Hal Roach, Jr.), with Carole Landis and Victor Mature.

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Aug. 11 at 12:30 and 6: "36 Fillette" (1989, Catherine Breillat; in French).... ¶ Aug. 11 at 3:15 and 8:45: "Vagabond" (1985, Agnès Varda; in French).

Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. (662-2133)—Aug. 11 at 8: "Peter Pan" (1924, Herbert Brenon; silent), with Betty Bronson. (Organ accompaniment written and played by Lee Erwin.)

Bryant Park, Sixth Ave. at 41st St. (982-4142)—Mondays, starting at dusk, free, drive-in-style moviegoing, beginning with Looney Tunes cartoons, coming attractions, and an onscreen clock that counts down the minutes until the feature begins. Aug. 16: "Woodstock" (see below).

Symphony Space, B'way at 95th St. (864-5400)—Aug. 12 at 7: "Sambizanga" (1961, Sarah Maldoror; in Portuguese).... ¶ Aug. 12 at 9: "Brightness" (1987, Souleymane Cissé; a Malian film, in Bambara).... ¶ Aug. 13 at 7: "Loulou" (1980, Maurice Pialat; in French).... ¶ Aug. 13 at 9: "Story of Women" (1989, Claude Chabrol; in French).... ¶ Aug. 14 at 7: "Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands" (1978, Bruno Barreto; a Brazilian film, in Portuguese).... ¶ Aug. 14 at 9: "Bye Bye Brazil" (1980, Carlos Diegues; a Brazilian film, in Portuguese).... ¶ Aug. 15 at 4: "The Age of the Medici" (1973, Roberto Rossellini). Four hours and twelve minutes, with two intermissions.

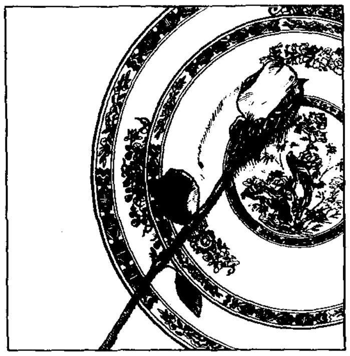
Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Aug. 13-15 at 7 and 9: A program of films by Hal Hartley.

MOVIES IN BRIEF

SEE PRECEDING PAGES FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA"
DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

Good Trip

MANHATTAN moviegoers will have the chance to cavort outdoors as they watch others cavort outdoors when "Woodstock" plays in Bryant Park on August 16. Michael Wadleigh's 1970 documentary of the epochal rock extravaganza is a hundred and eighty-five minutes of ideal open-air entertainment. It captures the groovy musical high points and the spacey, rain-soaked chaos of the 1969 festival, which was advertised as the "Woodstock Music and Art Fair, Three Days of Peace and Music." With a crew that boasted Martin Scorsese and Thelma Schoonmaker (as editors and assistant directors), Wadleigh immortalized the rise of Woodstock Nation. Impressionistic but surefooted, the film builds on pictures of hippies on horseback and workers preparing Max Yasgur's farm for a crowd that grew to roughly half a million, while the allusive lyrics and complicated song lines of counterculture rock waft through the soundtrack. By the time Richie Havens starts the program, we're ready to be uplifted by the singer's passion and the sight of hundreds of thousands of fans getting with the beat. Wadleigh and his fellow-cinematographers frame crisp images of legendary performances, including Joan Baez's audacious a-cappella "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," The Who in a paroxysm from "Tommy," Joe Cocker playing neurotic air guitar as he wails "With a Little Help from My Friends," Sly and the Family Stone taking everyone "Higher," and Jimi Hendrix' ripping valedictory rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner." Scorsese and Schoonmaker use split-screen editing for microcosmic as well as panoramic effects, guiding viewers from the inside out. The result is a you-are-there kind of trip: there's no greater rock experience in movies. This screening will be a drag only if it rains—because, unlike Woodstock, the show won't go on.



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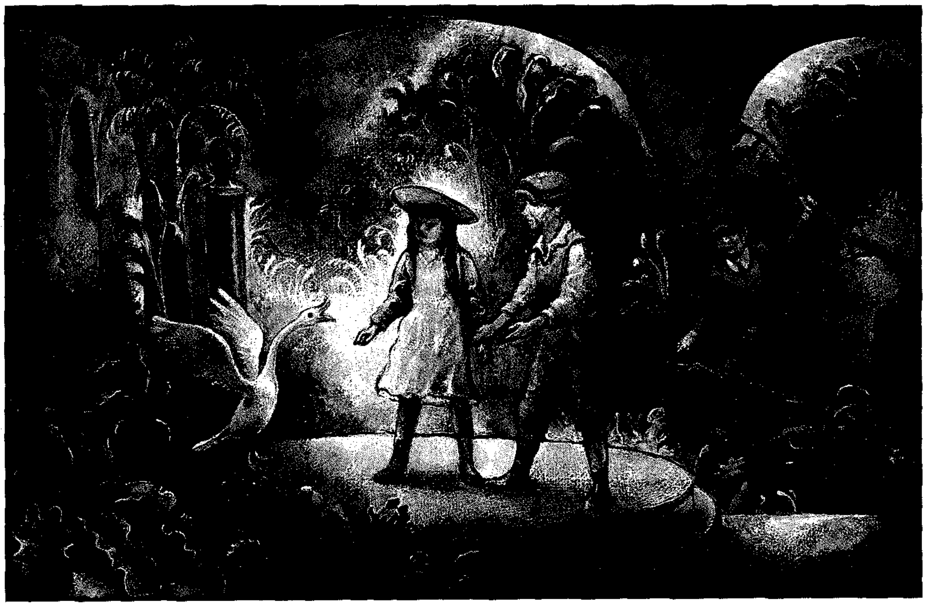
IN BRIEF–Cont'd

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Anthony Lane, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow.)

Advise and Consent (1962)—Mindless "inside" story of Washington political shenanigans, directed by Otto Preminger. Accused of having been a Communist, Leffingwell (Henry Fonda), the nominee for Secretary of State, perjures himself. A senator (Don Murray) is victimized because of a homosexual episode in his past. (When he goes to a gay bar, it's such a lurid, evil place that the director seems grotesquely straight.) There are noteworthy performances by Burgess Meredith, as Leffingwell's accuser, and by Franchot Tone, as the President; Charles Laughton is entertainingly flamboyant as a Southern senator. With Lew Ayres as the Vice-President, and Walter Pidgeon, Gene Tierney, Peter Lawford, Paul Ford, George Grizzard, Inga Swenson, Will Geer, Betty White, and some actual Washington Personages. The procession of people helps to take one's mind off the overwrought melodrama. Wendell Mayes adapted Allen Drury's best-seller.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; through Aug. 14.)

Amongst Friends—If this suburban crime movie is the latest word on Generation X, why does it resemble something Martin Scorsese did two decades ago? The setting may be the Five Towns of Long Island instead of Little Italy and the antiheroes may be Jewish, but the story of friendship and betrayal in a group of spoiled-rotten petty crooks is pure "Mean Streets"; it would make a lot more sense if we saw the three lead boy-men pop Scorsese's film into their VCRs. The twenty-six-year-old writer-director, Rob Weiss, does have shrewd timing—the plot moves like clockwork, and just about as mechanically, too. His observations are commonplace, and he flounders whenever he veers from white rap or tough-guy-ese—as in the scenes between the most idealistic, nonconformist member of the bunch (Patrick McGaw) and his high-school sweetheart (Mira Sorvino). Joseph Lindsey is the slipperiest gangsterling, a would-be Mr. Big, and Steve Parlavecchio is the garden-variety worm who turns.—M.S. (Angelika Film Center, 68th St. Playhouse, and Angelika 57.)



Opening August 13, Agnieszka Holland's "The Secret Garden."

SCOTT GILLIS

Coneheads—High brows and low comedy blend in this clever extension of the Conehead sketches from "Saturday Night Live." The director, Steve Barron, brings deadpan goofiness and crisp visual charm to the tale of a cone-domed husband and wife from the planet Remulak, who crash-land in the East River, have a daughter, settle down in New Jersey, and pretend to be from France. (The parents are, as always, Dan Aykroyd and Jane Curtin; the fizzy Michelle Burke is their rebellious teen-ager.) The movie is a series of riffs on immigration and naturalization. Hiding out from I.N.S. honcho Michael McKean and his suck-up underling (the hilariously fey David Spade), the supercompetent Coneheads assume the coloration of the suburban American middle class—and turn illegal-alien stereotypes on their pointy heads. Conehead argot veers between hyperrational definitions ("pizza" is "starch disk") and nonsense talk ("whore" is "flarthag"). It has a silly catchiness, as do the pop-culture references and sight gags. The cameo appearances by late-night TV comics are variable in quality, but Dave Thomas boasts a gasbag grandeur as Remulak's Highmaster. All in all, it's a pick-me-up. Script by Tom Davis, Aykroyd, and Bonnie and Terry Turner.—M.S. (19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Waverly, and Embassy.)

The Firm—That Cub Scout of superstars Tom Cruise is perfectly cast as the go-getting, white-bread hero of John Grisham's tale of chicanery and murder in a hoity-toity Memphis law firm. The director, Sydney Pollack, and his usual phalanx of screenwriters (Robert Towne, David Rayfiel, and David Rabe get script credit) try to improve on their source—and only partially succeed. The clunky plot continues to be riddled with implausibilities, and the movie runs a slack two hours and thirty-four minutes. But Pollack and his team do come up with a more logical line of action and give the hero and his wife (the sexy, skeptical Jeanne Tripplehorn) a smidgen of self-awareness. And they soup up the side characters. Holly Hunter, Gary Busey, Ed Harris, David Strathairn, and Wilford Brimley do themselves proud, and Gene Hackman is in a class by himself, brewing unprecedented mixtures of moral dry rot, fellow feeling, and animal vitality.—M.S. (19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, Tower East, East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, and Astor Plaza.)

The Fugitive—With Harrison Ford and Tommy Lee Jones, directed by Andrew Davis. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, Gemini, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

In the Line of Fire—Clint Eastwood plays Frank Horrigan, a tired-looking middle-aged Secret Service agent who gets wind of a plot to kill the President and marshals his flagging powers in an attempt to stop the assassin (John Malkovich). It's a basic race against the clock: the good guy knows what the bad guy means to do; the villain's preparations and the hero's investigation run on separate tracks until they converge, like runaway trains, at the scene of the intended crime. The heroics are stirring, because the star's ravaged face and stiff, weary gestures tell us that everything Horrigan does costs him something, physically and emotionally. The director, Wolfgang Petersen, isn't a particularly imaginative or stylish filmmaker, but he delivers the goods, and in record time. Both Eastwood's performance and the movie itself have the quality of meat-and-potatoes genre-picture entertainment: nothing fancy, nothing unusual. The only hints of more exotic and unpredictable sensations come from Malkovich, who is threatening to become the most gloriously peculiar screen presence since the heyday of Alastair Sim. Also with Rene Russo. Screenplay by Jeff Maguire; music by Ennio Morricone.—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 7/12/93.) (Village Theatre VII, Bay Cinema, New York Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Guild, 62nd & Broadway, and Embassy.)

Jurassic Park—Steven Spielberg's warm-blooded, state-of-the-art dinosaurs are a lot speedier than their nearest movie kin, the galumphing atomic-mutant monsters that crunched Japanese cities under their feet in the fifties and early sixties, and that enables the filmmaker to create dynamic stalk-and-chase sequences. But neither the carnivorous dinos nor the placid herbivores inspire anything close to awe, even with the aid of audience stimulants like surging symphonic music (by the shameless John Williams) and repeated closeups of wide-eyed, openmouthed actors. The screenplay, which is credited to Michael Crichton and David Koepp, reduces Crichton's intricately constructed novel to its bare bones: people running away from hungry animals. For all the ingenuity of the movie's engineering, "Jurassic Park" doesn't have the imagination—or the courage—to take us any place we haven't been a thousand times before. It's just a creature feature on amphetamines. With Jeff Goldblum, Laura Dern, Sam Neill, and Richard Attenborough.—T.R. (6/28/93) (First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Ziegfeld, and Metro Cinema.)

Love and Anarchy (1973)—Lina Wertmüller's large, epic film is set mostly in a thirties brothel; there, a young country bumpkin (Giancarlo Giannini, looking like a freckled young chicken), who intends to assassinate Mussolini, falls in love and botches his plans. The movie is uneven; it often seems like a silent film, and sometimes it is extravagant and operatic. But when Wertmüller concentrates on the whores' faces and attitudes it can be very beautiful. With Mariangela Melato, Lina Polito, Elena Fiore, and Eros Pagni. Cinematography by Giuseppe Rotunno; music by Nino Rota. In Italian.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Aug. 16.)

Poetic Justice—Four young blacks, including Justice (Janet Jackson) and Lucky (Tupac Shakur), drive from Los Angeles to Oakland over the weekend. This being the movies, it turns out to be a journey of revelation—more for the characters, in this case, than for the audience. We sit and stare while they bicker and smooch. The movie was written and directed by John Singleton, and it marks a depressing departure from his first feature, "Boyz N the Hood," which buzzed with rage and frustration. After a punchy start, the new film takes people away from their troubles, but it's a vacation without fun; we watch Justice gazing out to sea, or intoning lines of what is supposed to be her own verse. The poetry, written by Maya Angelou, clumps along with a confessional earnestness that makes you clench your fists and try not to laugh. The only live wire is Lucky, with his deep wariness of life; he has a couple of sprightly scenes that prod the picture awake. Otherwise, however, "Poetic Justice" feels oddly conservative in the kinds of feelings it shares out among its characters (especially the women), and in the cute domestic destinies it imagines for them. Like

Jackson herself (who never gets to sing), the whole enterprise is so poker-faced, and takes itself so seriously, that you're left wondering how Singleton could have shed so much creative energy between one film and the next.—A.L. (8/2/93) (19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Manhattan Twin, Orpheum VII, Waverly, 84th Street Sixplex, and National Twin.)

Rising Sun—Philip Kaufman's witty, luxuriantly sinister mystery thriller is set in contemporary Los Angeles: a sleek, corporate environment that isn't merely shady and deceitful, but fundamentally inauthentic, like virtual reality. The murder of a blond party girl in the boardroom of a powerful Japanese corporation exposes a dense network of connections—among business enterprises (Japanese and American), politicians, the police, and the press. The L.A.P.D. detectives investigating the case—Connor (Sean Connery), a Japan expert, and Smith (Wesley Snipes), his young partner—don't stand heroically apart from this alluring corporate culture; they're ambiguous heroes in a looking-glass world. Connery and Snipes are both wonderful here. Kaufman treats cop-movie narrative conventions and film-noir visual style with a kind of affectionate irony; the picture provides plenty of creepy atmosphere and violent action, and its pace is relentless, but the over-all mood is playful, almost giddy. This detective story is a thrilling and eerily suggestive tour of a territory whose boundaries are maddeningly elusive, murderously fluid. The terrific supporting cast includes Harvey Keitel, Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa, Tia Carrere, Ray Wise, Kevin Anderson, and Mako. Cinematography by Michael Chapman; music by the great Toru Takemitsu. Based on the novel by Michael Crichton.—T.R. (7/26/93) (Baronet, Coronet, Orpheum VII, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Regency, and Criterion Center.)

Robin Hood: Men in Tights—The funniest parts of Mel Brooks' lampoon of Sherwood Forest are Patrick Stewart's imitation of Sean Connery and Dom DeLuise's impression of a medieval Don Corleone named Don Giovanni. On the whole, Brooks goes off half-cocked. He teeters on the verge of slapstick operetta, but doesn't dare to take the plunge. Cary Elwes is comical and stalwart as Robin of Loxley; he dresses like Errol Flynn and assumes Flynn's bravado while sending up Kevin Costner. Amy Yasbeck is deliciously ardent as a hot-to-trot Maid Marian, and Roger Rees is admirable as the scramble-tongued Sheriff of Rottingham. (Alan Rickman, though, was more inspired as the sheriff in Costner's movie, subverting claptrap from within.) Richard Lewis's Prince John—a backdated version of his neurotic urban Jew—is simply frantic. Even when Brooks isn't recycling gags from previous hits, the humor is rarely as fresh as the *Mad* parody of the legend in the fifties, which had Robin blowing a "woodland horn" that was a saxophone, and stealing from the rich to give to himself. Script by Brooks, Evan Chandler, and J. David Shapiro.—M.S. (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 34th St. East, Gotham Cinema, Chelsea Cinemas, Metro Cinema, and National Twin.)

The Sandpiper (1965)—At the time it was released, Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, who had been the world's most highly publicized scandalous lovers during the making of "Cleopatra" only a couple of years before, had finally got married, and as the massive-headed Burton, looking more foreshortened than ever, eyed the portly Taylor in her Irene Sharaff poncho, and they delivered such lines as "I never knew what love was before" and "I've lost all my sense of sin," the people in the theatres could not contain themselves. The movie will probably never be quite as hilarious again, but it's a classic, no matter when you see it. Burton, an Episcopal clergyman, makes high-toned literary remarks to beatnik-atheist-artist Taylor, such as "I can't dispel you from my thoughts," and then, when he hates himself in the morning, she reassures him with "Don't you realize that what happened between us is *good*?" At the last, the clergyman, redeemed by contact with the atheist's spiritual values, casts off the temptation of wealth and worldly success and finds his simple faith again. If that isn't enough, there's Charles Bronson playing a sculptor (posing for him, Taylor demurely cups her breasts with her hands—though they seem inadequate to the task). Vincente Minnelli directed from a script by Dalton Trumbo and Michael Wilson. With Eva Marie Saint as the clergyman's wife; she says bright things like "Thinking is a kind of prayer, isn't it?"—P.K. (Gramercy; starting Aug. 15.)

Sleepless in Seattle—A romantic comedy, of sorts. The romance is airy and distant, because the lovers never meet until the final scene, and the comedy is kind of wistful, because it was directed by Nora Ephron. Tom Hanks plays Sam, left miserable by the death of his wife, with only his young son, Jonah (Ross Malinger), to console him. The consolation goes a bit far; Jonah rings up a radio talk show to say that his dad needs love. Many listeners melt with sympathy, none more so than Annie (Meg Ryan), in Baltimore, shortly to be married and none too happy about it. For the rest of the movie, fate—and Jonah—do their best to bring the couple together, despite the continent that divides them. Hanks and Ryan have quick wits, and funny faces to match—they should be striking sparks off each other, not mooching around thousands of miles apart and waiting for something to happen. Hanks has a few goofy outbursts, and there is lively backup from Rosie O'Donnell and Rob Reiner as helpful friends, but anyone expecting another "When Harry Met Sally . . ." will be disappointed. At least Harry *met* Sally.—A.L. (7/19/93) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 19th Street East 6, Beekman, Orpheum VII, and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ Criterion Center; through Aug. 12.)

So I Married an Axe Murderer—This amateurish crazy comedy stars Mike Myers as a San Francisco coffeehouse poet in love with a female butcher (Nancy Travis) who may have killed three previous mates. Like Myers' panicky smirk of a lead performance, the film seesaws between lack of confidence and overconfidence: flat, dated repartee between Myers and Anthony LaPaglia (as a would-be Serpico) follows a comical trick shot tracing the genesis of a cup of cappuccino. Either Robbie Fox's screenplay never had connective tissue, or the director, Thomas Schlamme, cut it up into a string of paper clowns. Several cameo performers—Phil Hartman, Charles Grodin, and the uncredited Alan Arkin—polish self-contained parts to perfection and show up the rest of the movie. Myers gets more laughs as the hero's boisterous Scotch dad than he does as a romantic comedian; the willfully weird cast includes Brenda Fricker and Amanda Plummer.—M.S. (Murray Hill Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Chelsea Cinemas. . . . ¶ Village Theatre VII, and Orpheum VII. Evenings only. . . . ¶ Festival; through Aug. 12, evenings only.)

La Vie de Bohème—Aki Kaurismäki's new film is a beautiful comedy about down-and-out artists. The source material is Henri Murger's "Scènes de la vie de Bohème," which was published in the mid-nineteenth century. The movie's action takes place in modern-day Paris, but everything on the screen has a timeless, almost archaic feel. Kaurismäki has created a kind of twilight world, half reverent, half ironic, which allows the ideals and the ardor of the nineteenth-century artist to persist, improbably, in these less idealistic, less ardent times. The three heroes—a painter (Matti Pellonpää), a writer (Andre Wilms), and a musician (Kari Väänänen)—all look to be on the wrong side of forty, and they have the peculiar dignity of aging innocents who have long since stopped worrying about looking silly. Kaurismäki (who also wrote the screenplay) finds the loveliest, most delicate humor in this brotherhood of outcasts. Also with Evelyne Didi, Christine Murillo, Jean-Pierre Léaud, and a silky black dog named Laika, who represents his species nobly. The elegant black-and-white cinematography is by Timo Salminen. In French.—T.R. (8/9/93) (Film Forum.)

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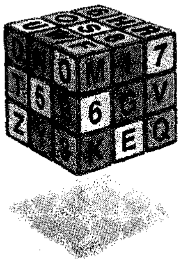

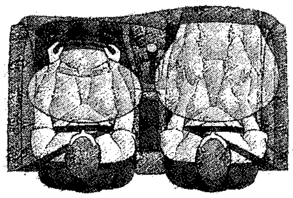

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

BIANCA'S RETRIBUTION

THE Warhol estate, the focus of much bitter dissent and litigation in recent times, has acquired a determined legal antagonist in the person of Bianca Jagger, the New York socialite and espouser of causes. Ms. Jagger was a friend of Andy Warhol's for fifteen years but took strong exception to her portrayal in "The Andy Warhol Diaries," which were published in 1989, two years after his death. So, taking her grievance to Britain, where the libel laws are more favorable to a plaintiff than they are in America, she has notched her first victory in what could be an extended international campaign to protect her reputation. Late last month, she flew to London to hear in court that the diaries' publishers in Britain, Simon & Schuster, having previously agreed to delete defamatory references to her from the British edition of the book, would now pay her an undisclosed sum in damages, which her lawyer described as "substantial." The cost of the action and these damages, however, will be borne not by the publishers but by the Warhol estate, which has undertaken to indemnify Simon & Schuster in the British case.

Back in New York after her victory, Ms. Jagger said last week that she was considering further legal action, against Simon & Schuster, Warner Books (the diaries' American publisher), and/or the Warhol estate, in the United States and possibly in other countries in which the book had been published. Her New York attorney, Stanley S. Arkin, said from a car phone in Los Angeles, "The British case acknowledges that she was defamed. It establishes a principle." When he was asked if Ms. Jagger would sue in the United States, he said, "It's under consideration." Might she sue the Warhol estate? "You bet we would! They've got two hundred and twenty million dollars! Absolutely!" A statement read out in court in London did not specify the dozen or so defamatory passages that the publishers had excised from the diaries (altogether, there were more than a hundred references to Ms. Jagger), but it said that "the Andy Warhol book by its damaging allegations had sought to destroy everything she stood for," and it continued, "As a result of these defamatory references the Plaintiff's ability to pursue important commitments of a civic and political nature has been impaired. These pursuits constitute her life's work. The loss of reputation has significantly damaged her role and effectiveness in these endeavours."

PHILIPPE-PETIT ROULET

One such endeavor is a television documentary about her native country, "Nicaragua in Transition," on which she was recently working in an office in the HBO Building, in midtown. Sitting there amid reels of film, Ms. Jagger said, "You just *can't* destroy someone's life overnight by making accusations based on falsehoods. My friends said 'Don't sue,' but I had to. Otherwise, lies become history, and it's too late to change them." All the same, she refused to blame Andy Warhol for the book. "I don't believe Andy even wrote it," she said. "It is as if it had been fabricated by someone who had only a vague idea of what really happened. Andy was a mischievous man, but I didn't consider him to be vicious." On being asked about the seventies in New York, when she and Warhol had been close, she said that those years had had "a veneer of beauty" but had not been "a time of hope."

At that point, the phone rang, and she issued instructions to somebody in her Manhattan apartment about how to bathe Muhamed Ribic, an eight-year-old Muslim boy whom she recently rescued from the besieged Bosnian town of Tuzla and brought to the United States for heart surgery. She said she intended to take him back to his parents when that was possible. Her next trip, however, will be to Moscow, where she hopes, this week, to discuss the situation in Bosnia with Aleksey II, the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church.

CYBERHERO

HALF an hour before William Gibson and his fellow-novelist Steve Erickson began their readings in Central Park, the front center rows of Rumsey Playfield, off East Seventy-second Street, had mostly been staked out by a rabble of computer hackers. They called each other Voxers, for MindVox, which was the computer bulletin board they communicated on. There were about twenty of them. Some had come all the way from Boston, or Atlanta, and few had ever met face-to-face. "We're not fans," one of them said. "We're participants." The readings were part of a series of free events called SummerStage, and the writers were billed as "fiction visionaries." Gibson is the father of the techno-cultural phenomenon called "cyberpunk." "He is the Aesop of the computer age" is how one Voxer put it.

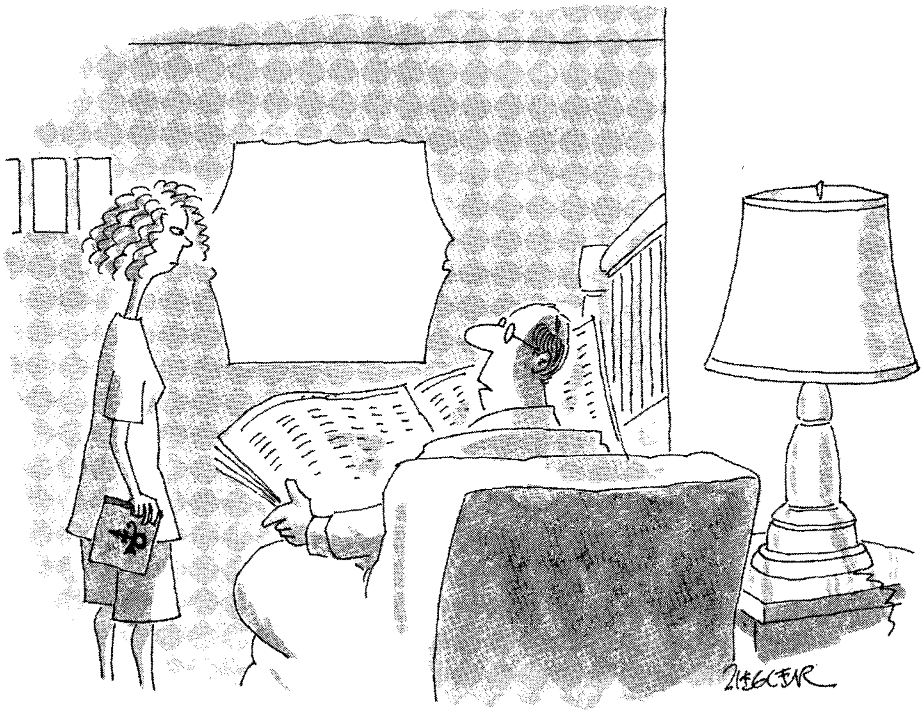
"Cyberspace" is Gibson's famous term for the new computer universe. In his books (he's been writing for over a decade now), cyberspace is a strange, extravagant place. Someone in the front row (not a Voxer) called it "a kind of shared public hallucination." Gibson did not invent the phrase "virtual reality," but his novels anticipated the concept. The movie director Oliver Stone borrowed heavily from them to create his addled television miniseries called "Wild Palms." In Gibson's "Cyberspace" trilogy, "cowboys" access cyberspace using special skull implants. "They're like hackers," the front-row expert explained. "They get in and fly among the data bases."

Nearly a million copies have been sold of the books in the triology—"Neuromancer," "Count Zero," and "Mona Lisa Overdrive." Gibson is about to publish another novel, "Virtual Light," and will be making more appearances in Manhattan later this month. Posters advertising those events make him look goggle-eyed, even fearsome. But in the flesh he looked fresh-faced and spindly. He was wearing chinos and a white cotton shirt, and before the readings began he hung around beside the stage, smiling down at people in the audience—he is six feet six inches tall. Quirky country tunes and snatches of jazz were played over the P.A. system. Soon the green bleacher seats, set back under the trees, began to fill up. The Voxers, up front, couldn't stop talking. They drank cans of beer and called each other by strange Voxer names, such as Deckard, Gearhead, and Morphy.

"Gibson's books are hard and dense; they're just really packed," Gearhead, an amiable video engineer from Brooklyn, with a blooming black tattoo on one shoulder, said. The Voxers' leader, Tomwhore, who had a huge eyeball stencilled on his T-shirt, and an eyeball trinket hanging from his neck, said he and his friends spent a few hours on MindVox each day, "just filling up space with information—not snarfing. Snarfing is not good." ("Snarfing" is a word that only Voxers, apparently, understand.)

Steve Erickson, who has a mane of graying hair, read first, from his new novel, "Arc d'X." It was an anarchic piece about Berlin in 1999: the zoo has been torn open, and the city is littered with live and dead animals; a wandering American checks into a shabby hotel, has telephone sex, and is bludgeoned to death by a pack of skinheads.

Gibson read for about twenty-five minutes, from "Virtual Light." He later described it as a darkly comic urban detective story with social commentary thrown in. "Lime-and-purple diagonals chased themselves across the screen, then faded" was the first line of the reading. Gibson lives in Vancouver, British Columbia, but he grew up in southwestern Virginia, and still drags his vowels when he talks. When the reading was over, he caught a plane back to Vancouver, to finish a film script. "He's all sweaty," a member of his entourage said. "He's spent." The Voxers chatted for a while longer, and then Tomwhore, holding a string of orange balloons, led them away toward Lexington Avenue. "We're all going out for a beer," he said. "Why don't you come hang?"



"I'm sorry, Melissa, but I really don't care what Prince is calling himself these days. I'm going to continue calling him what I've always called him."

IDEA OF FUN

IT was an unusual Saturday afternoon at Yankee Stadium. Donald Trump was playing first base and Regis Philbin was playing second. The occasion was the third annual Celebrity Softball Game, featuring Trump's New York All-Stars, an ad-hoc group of film and television performers, and the Hollywood All-Stars, another ad-hoc group of film and television performers, and the teams were playing each other, it was said, "to live out their childhood fantasies." The event was being promoted as "just a kind of fun thing for the stars," and five hundred free tickets had been distributed to local children. The stadium was half empty. The weather was hot. The game was behind schedule. The dugouts were filled with impatient Yankees and Milwaukee Brewers, who were scheduled to play immediately after the softball game. The New York–Hollywood series was tied at a game apiece, and Trump's team was down, 5–0.

In the first inning, Trump led off—after all, it was his team—to a mixture of applause and boos. The legs of Trump's size-36 blue-and-white stretch pants were uneven, and he tugged absently at his jersey. A camera enlarged his eager batting stance on the stadium screen, and he appeared to be perspiring. Trump took the first two pitches. A Yankee shouted, "Swing the bat!" Trump swung, lined a clean single to left, and trotted to first. Wade Boggs nodded approvingly behind fancy Oakley sunglasses, and spat. Someone said, "I heard he only pulled one or two muscles last time." Philbin cheered him on, but Trump was soon caught in a double play. In another at-bat, he stranded runners on second and third and walked dejectedly back to the dugout. He had seen better days. In the second inning, Philbin fell behind in the count and struck out, to sympathetic applause; the fans loved him, and between innings he worked the box seats in masterly fashion, pressing flesh and signing autographs. On the field, Trump moved deliberately, taking his time, squinting in the afternoon sun. Philbin was peppy and spry, and snapped his gum like a professional. But, despite the much promoted rivalry and star power—Hollywood's Drake Hogestyn (of the soap opera "Days of Our Lives") and New York's Dondre Whitfield ("All My Children") both hit inside-the-park home runs—the game lacked urgency, and it became obvious that the team from California was superior. In the end, the Hollywood All-Stars handily defeated the New York All-Stars, 7–2, whereupon some of the players from both teams retired to the Plaza to reflect on their adventure.

THE IDEAL

"It's not so much not being able to find a coffee shop in New York City," Richard Baratta says. "It's that

WEIGHT WATCHER

Has anybody else noticed? Columbia has lost weight. That larger-than-life torch-bearing figure, an inspiration to moviegoers for the past seventy years, is now slim-hipped and positively svelte. In a sort of the-new-me pose, her right knee—you can tell by the folds of her tunic—is bent slightly in front of the left. She has also had a makeover. Her former dark, discreetly styled hair, reminiscent of the farmer woman's in Grant Wood's "American Gothic," has been coiffed and dyed into a curly, upswept, auburn version. The blurry otherworldliness of her surroundings has been replaced by a glowing Technicolor cloudscape. The torch is dimmer.

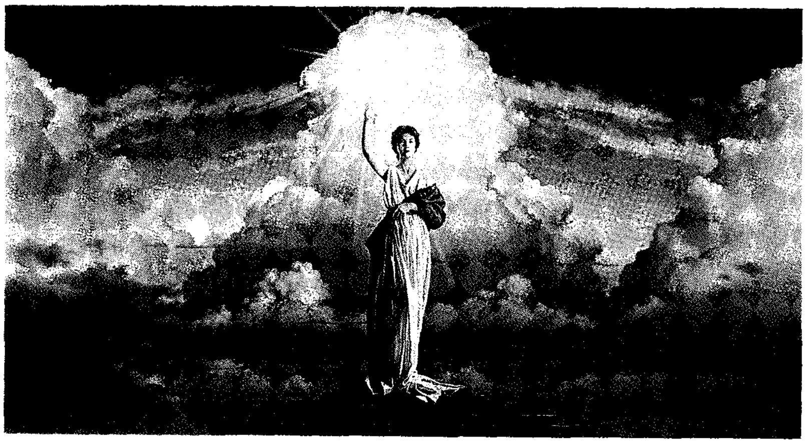
The particularly unsettling thing about all this is that, whereas the former Columbia resembled a monumental marble statue with a mythological aura, the new Columbia looks, creepily, like a real person—a bit like Hillary, actually, or maybe that woman who was in front of you in the supermarket line yesterday. This diminished figure first appeared on the screen with the mid-June opening of "Last Action Hero," but then you might have thought it was your lyin' eyes. Now, with "In the Line of Fire," it's confirmed.

Why would anyone tamper with this venerable icon of the American cinema? "The company, which became part of Sony about four years ago, had entered a new phase in its history," Sid Ganis, the president of marketing and distribution for Columbia Pictures, said by telephone from Los Angeles. "It was felt that the Columbia Lady at this moment in the company's history should be revised. We wanted to evoke the richness and grandeur of Hollywood while moving the logo into the future."

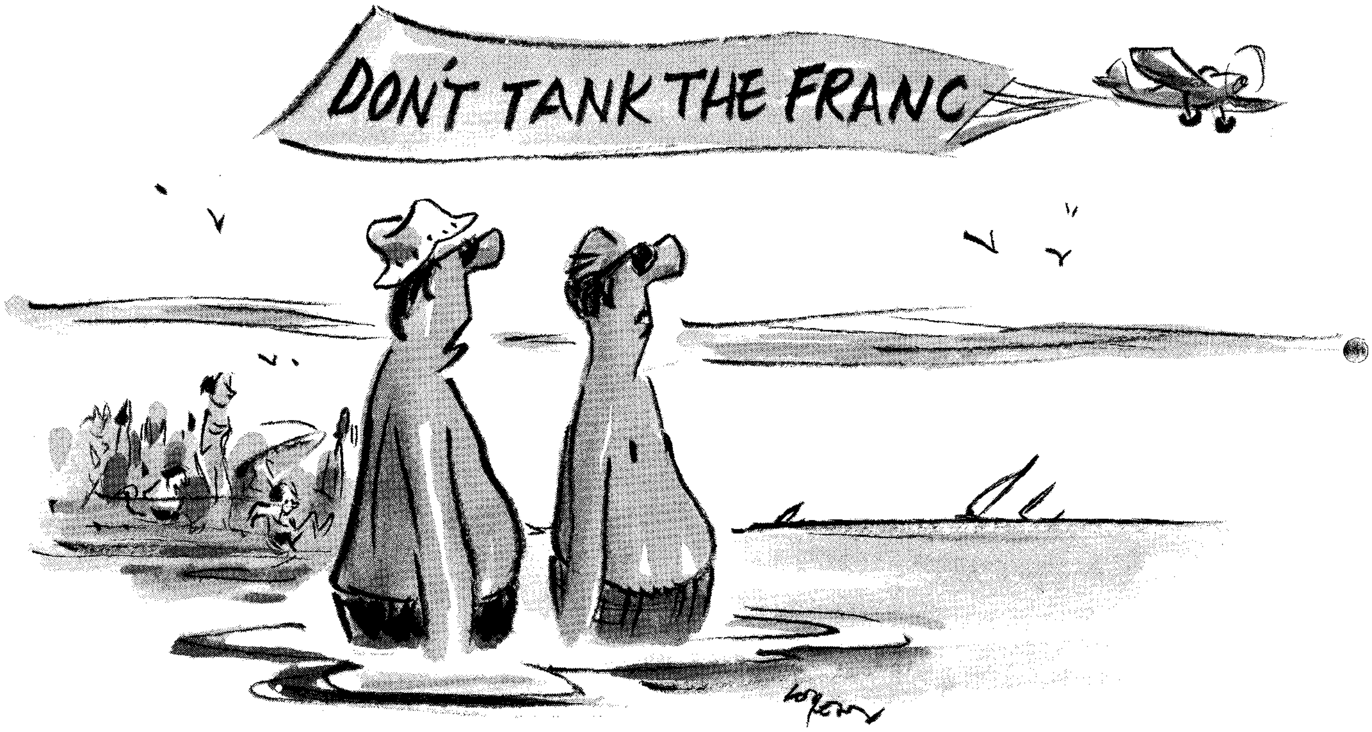
Mr. Ganis went on to say that the Columbia Lady had actually undergone a number of revisions already. According to company legend, the concept of using a woman holding a torch was the brainchild of Harry Cohn, the driving force behind Columbia Pictures from its founding, in 1924, until his death, in 1958. Cohn, the son of immigrants, had the Lady furled in the American flag. (She was sometimes mistaken for the Statue of Liberty.) At her inception, her physique embodied the then Hollywood ideal of a voluptuous woman. In 1941, the flag gave way to a simple fabric shawl, and the shawl was subtly tinkered with from time to time, either to blend or to contrast with the tunic beneath it. Also, as tastes changed, the Lady became less curvaceous but always remained buxom by comparison with the new model.

Mr. Ganis explained that the present figure, with its dramatically heightened sense of reality, was created by enhancing a painted image with computer technology until the desired result was achieved. "Now everybody thinks she's *somebody*," he said.

—Ann Barry



COURTESY OF COLUMBIA PICTURES



"I don't know about you, but I come to the Hamptons to relax."

• •

when you're going to shoot inside a place for eight or nine days—anything over five days, really—you need wild walls." Mr. Baratta, who is the unit manager for a new TriStar Pictures film called "Cop Gives Waitress $2 Million Tip," is explaining why, on a Tribeca corner with three coffee shops, four restaurants, one bar, one gourmet-food shop, and one deli within bagel-tossing distance, his company hired three dozen construction workers to build the Ideal Coffee Shop, a three-story old-fashioned counter-and-window-booths coffee shop with wild walls.

"Do you know what a wild wall is?" Mr. Baratta asks during a chat on the telephone. "I don't know where you're sitting now, but if you're in a four-walled room and you're sitting against one of the walls, in order to get a long shot of you the cameraman can only go back as far as the wall on the other side of the room. And if it's a small room that's not far. So what you've got to do is make that a movable wall. It gives you the freedom to do what you want, creatively and technically, that you wouldn't get if you went into somebody's coffee shop." What was the cost of that kind of freedom?

"If I knew, I couldn't tell you."

A million dollars?

"You're way, way over."

A couple of hundred thousand?

"That's more ballpark."

In addition to wild walls, the Ideal will have Bridget Fonda on the staff as Yvonne, the two-million-dollar waitress; Nicolas Cage as Maury, the customer-cop; electricity, running water, a soda fountain, a sprinkler system, fifteen counter seats, five window booths, a thirty-foot ceiling that can drop down to ten, and a four-story warehouse façade next door. It will not have a gas line. It will have two kinds of food: the Ideal's specialty, prop-food, which with the help of certain effects will resemble food actors might eat; and food-food, which they actually *will* eat, made in a truck outside. Already, the Ideal looks so convincing that local residents have stopped by to ask for coffee and jobs as waiters.

During filming, which runs from now until October, the gang from the Ideal will be everywhere. They've recently taken over a former furniture store around the corner and transformed it into a scene shop. They will also be at Yankee Stadium, the Franklin Street subway station, and the Hudson Grocery Farm; on the steps of City Hall; in a fake apartment at Fifteenth Street and Ninth Avenue, a courthouse, and a hot-air balloon suspended over Central Park; and coming and going at the Ideal.

One place that the Ideal gang won't be taking over is LeRoy's Coffee Shop, directly across the street, which *does* have a gas hookup. LeRoy's was apparently considered for the role of the Ideal Coffee Shop—along with three thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine other local coffee shops—but the movie people decided that the place was too narrow. LeRoy's might still get a part, though. "They came to me the other day and asked me if, with compensation, I would mind changing the sign on my awning, which says 'Coffee Shop,' " Herb David, LeRoy's owner, says. "They want to call it a tavern. They said, 'Of course, you'll be compensated for it.' I said, 'Fine.' "

Mr. David says that he likes having the movie people around. "They're big kibitzers, there's a lot of joking going on, and we're feeding them all day long," he says. "We're sending them buckets and buckets of ice, and buckets and buckets of sodas, and all kinds of cold drinks, so, besides the breakfast and the lunch and the coffee breaks, we're getting a lot of extra business. And they're spending a mint." ♦

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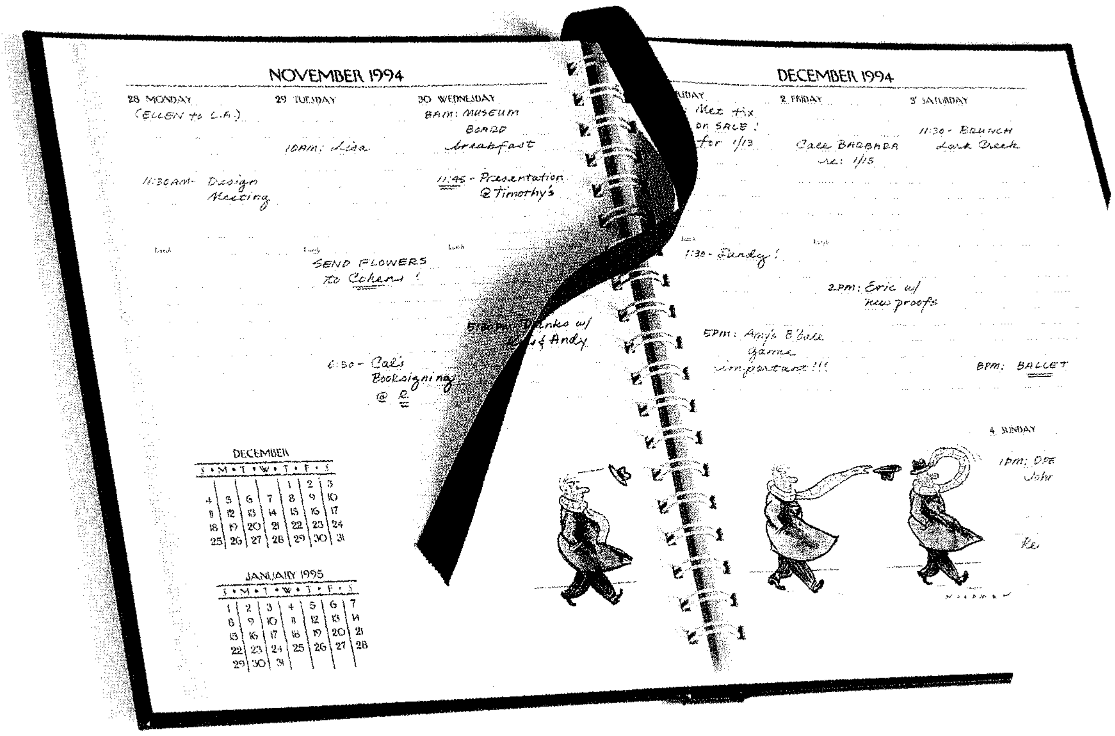

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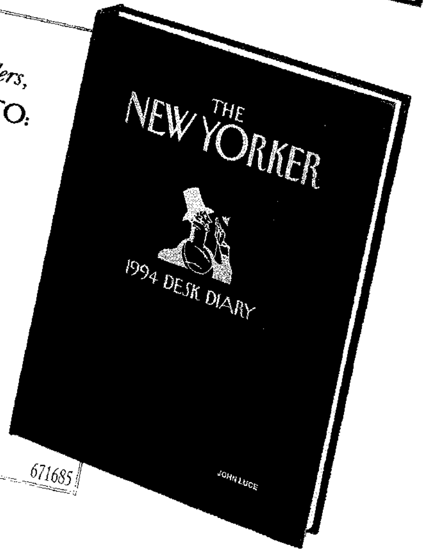

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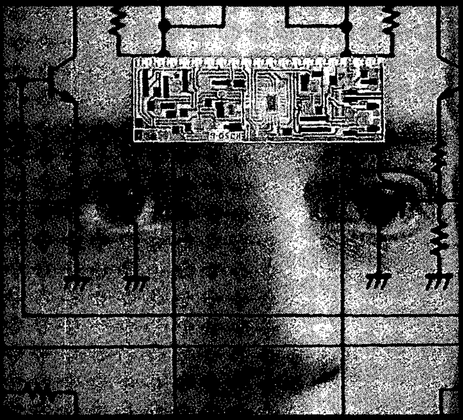

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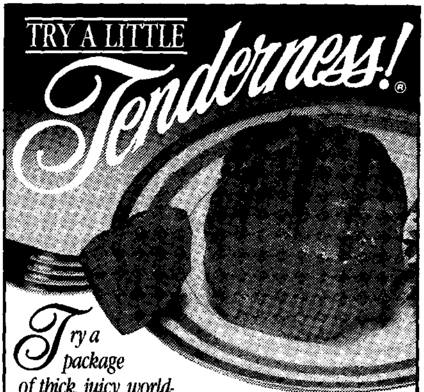

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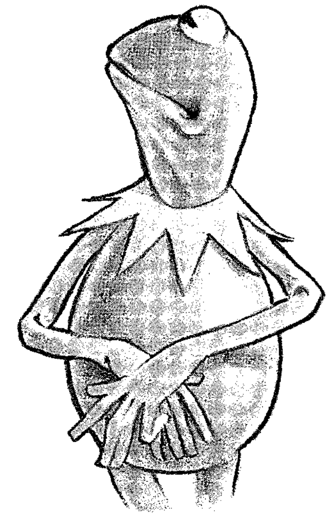
ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

LOOKING OUT FOR KERMIT

Jim Henson's children not only kept his company and his creative vision together but also made them more profitable in the bargain.

BY DAVID OWEN

WHEN Brian Henson finally took down the family photographs in his New York office, his associates were relieved. Many executives have pictures of their families in their offices, but Henson's were different. The pictures weren't of his children (he doesn't have any); they were of him. The office had belonged to his father, Jim Henson, the creator of the Muppets, who died, suddenly, in 1990, at the age of fifty-three. Brian assumed the presidency of his father's company, Jim Henson Productions, a little less than a year later, after a turbulent interim period, at the age of twenty-seven. He did so uneasily. Although he moved into his father's office, he occupied it tentatively, and he left the furnishings as they had been. The childhood photographs of him and his brother and three sisters remained on the wall beside his desk, where his father had hung them. To change anything in the office would have seemed presumptuous.



MICHAEL FRITH © 1993, HENSON

Brian finally took the pictures down in late 1992, after he had been president of the company for almost two years. His older sister Lisa—she is on the board of directors of the company, and has also just been named the president of production at Columbia Pictures—said she viewed the removal of the photographs as a sign that Brian finally felt comfortable sitting at his father's desk. By then, he had many reasons to feel comfortable. Shortly after Jim Henson died, various Wall Street analysts had predicted that his company would have to be sold or taken public to keep it from going under. They'd said that the five Henson children—who had inherited the company from their father, and who ranged in age from nineteen to thirty at the time of his death—had neither the experience nor the financial resources that would be needed to run the business in the absence of its founder and chief creative force. As it has turned out, the analysts were wrong. Lisa, Cheryl, Brian, John, and Heather Henson fought to keep the company intact, and then Brian's siblings rallied behind him when he transformed himself virtually overnight into a highly effective corporate leader. Today, Jim Henson Productions is a healthier company than it was when Jim Henson died.

The story could easily have turned out differently. Henson's death came during what was already the darkest period in the company's history. For about a year, he had been pursuing a merger with the Walt Disney Company. He had felt at first that merging with Disney would relieve him of the burden of running an international business, while enhancing his ability to pursue expensive creative projects, but before long a number of his associates, and maybe even Henson himself, had begun to worry that the deal might be a mistake. Negotiations with Disney were going poorly, and tempers were short on both sides. Then Henson died, and a problematic business negotiation turned into a nightmare.

Cheryl Henson, who is a vice-president of the company and, at thirty-two, the second eldest of the five Henson children, recalls those days with evident distress. "There were half a dozen lawyers in my father's apartment within hours of his death," she told me. "Within *hours*. Brian was in London when my father got sick, and he didn't get back to New York until just after he had died, and the lawyers arrived only a few hours later. It was horrible, and it just went on from there. We were five kids who needed to mourn for our father, and instead we were immediately thrown into a very, very complex situation."

The rescue of Jim Henson Productions by the Henson children is a story that would have appealed very much to Jim Henson. In "Labyrinth"—Henson's second non-Muppet feature, released in 1986—a baby is kidnapped by an evil goblin king (played by David Bowie), and the baby's teen-age sister embarks on a seemingly hopeless quest to get him back. She succeeds in the end, because her ordeal has forced her to grow into the sort of person who, through purity of heart and steadfastness of purpose, can successfully match wits with the sort of person who sings rock songs while walking on the ceilings of his fortress. Something similar happened to the Hensons as they did battle with the Walt Disney Company and its army of goblin lawyers. The negotiations and the lawsuit brought the five children closer together, focussed their energies on the future of the company, and pushed them beyond the tragedy of their father's death. Very quietly, and without exactly meaning to, they seemed to be building an entertainment dynasty. In an enormous understatement, Cheryl Henson says, "It's been an interesting couple of years."

JIM HENSON was just a youngster himself when he got his start in television. In 1954, when he was a tall, gawky high-school senior in a suburb of Washington, D.C., who had been involved in a puppetry club, he was hired by a local TV station as a part-time puppeteer on a Saturday-morning program for children. The following year, while he was studying art and stage design at the University of Maryland, he was hired by a competing station to produce puppet segments known as "Inga's Angle" for a show called "Afternoon." These segments soon grew into "Sam and Friends," a regular five-minute puppet show, whose cast of characters included a creature of indeterminate species which would eventually evolve into Kermit the Frog. Helping Henson operate the puppets was his girlfriend, Jane Nebel, who was a gifted ceramist and a senior art major at the university. (They married in 1959.) "Sam and Friends" rapidly became a cult hit in Washington. It was broadcast late in the evening, just before "Tonight," and was so popular that the station soon gave it a second time slot.

"Sam and Friends" ran for six years, but Henson didn't preserve more than a handful of the shows. One reason for this apparent oversight is that his initial interest in "Sam and Friends" was not with puppetry, or even with comedy, but with television itself. He made kinescopes only of episodes in which he was attempting some special technique—such as superimposing graphics over his characters, or experimenting with different camera lenses—that he wanted to study later. Henson was unusual even among television pioneers in that he viewed the new medium as being entirely different from anything that had come before. Many early television programs were little more than radio shows or stage plays performed in front of a camera. "Sam and Friends," in contrast, was shaped in almost every detail by the unique requirements of TV. The puppets had soft, simple, expressive faces, because Henson believed that traditional theatre puppets, whose heads were typically made of hard materials, looked stiff and awkward in the unaccustomed intimacy of a television closeup. Henson and Nebel didn't work on a stage or behind a traditional puppet set. They treated the television screen itself as their theatre: they operated their puppets above their heads in the middle of a television studio, their eyes glued to video monitors standing on the floor, so that their point of view would always be the same as that of the audience.

Sometime after Lisa Henson was born, in 1960, Jane Henson drew back from puppetry, and she eventually retired altogether to become a full-time mother and homemaker. Jim Henson was just finishing college when Lisa was born; with two live television shows to produce each day and a full-time job in a scene shop, he had been able to attend school only part time and took a couple of extra years to graduate. He had won a local Emmy in 1958, and the Muppets had later made a guest appearance on "The Steve Allen Show," so he was beginning both to attract serious attention and to earn a little money. To celebrate his graduation, he and Jane bought an enormous old Rolls-Royce and drove it to the ceremony. A month later, they loaded Lisa into the back seat and drove to Detroit, to attend a conference held by an organization called the Puppeteers of America.

At this conference, Henson met Don Sahlin, who would soon become an important partner. During the sixties and early seventies, Sahlin—who died in 1978—built virtually every Muppet. He had dark eyebrows and a big mustache, and he loved practical jokes. Monsters and mechanical arms were always popping out of drawers or through doorways in his workshop. He kept a large cage full of small rodents there, and he would set them free each morning. He used to build elaborate gerbil obstacle courses out of cardboard tubes, scrap lumber, and bits and pieces of Muppet raw material. He would also drape Slinkys from the ceiling, and the gerbils would use them as catwalks. They would climb to a point directly above Sahlin's desk, then drop to his head, a favorite perch.

In addition to being a Muppet factory, Sahlin's workshop frequently served as a sort of day camp for the Hensons' older children. (Lisa, Cheryl, Brian, and John were born at roughly regular intervals between 1960 and 1965; Heather was born in 1970.) Jim Henson travelled more and more as he became more successful, so one way for him to spend time with his children was by taking them with him when he went to work. Lisa and Cheryl remember many happy hours in the workshop. They would sew clothes for themselves or for their dolls, and sometimes they would work on puppets or props. Brian enjoyed building puppets and props as well, and he also helped Sahlin assemble enormous model rockets. In the workshop were boxes and drawers full of plastic eyeballs and knitting needles and toupee tape and tiny electric motors, and there were friendly grownups who would stop what they were doing to turn a few doll-house-table legs on a lathe.

During most of the sixties, the Hensons lived in an old farmhouse in Greenwich, Connecticut. As the children got older, the house often bore a strong resemblance to the workshop. It was isolated from other houses by a busy street, and the Henson children mostly had one another for playmates. They entertained themselves by undertaking elaborate crafts projects, which sometimes grew to fill the house, and by prowling around as much of their neighborhood as they could safely reach on foot. Their only close neighbor was a man in his nineties, living alone in the house next door. He had an enormous overgrown and dilapidated garden, and the Henson children would sneak over and play in it. The old man's only companion was an ancient parrot that spoke in the voices of the man's dead relatives.

The Hensons' remoteness from the rest of Greenwich was more than geographical. As the early sixties turned into the late sixties, Jim Henson grew a large, bib-shaped beard, let his hair creep onto his shoulders, wore a leather cap, carried a shoulder bag, and listed himself in the Greenwich telephone directory as a puppeteer. Cheryl remembers that as a child she visited a doctor whose initial reaction upon noting her father's occupation was that it was irresponsible for a puppeteer to have had so many children.

Henson's most important break came in the late sixties, when he was asked to join a small group called the Children's Television Workshop. C.T.W. was brainstorming ideas for what was meant to be an innovative new television show for children. The show, which would ultimately be called "Sesame Street," was intended to present educational material in the fast-paced, accessible format of television commercials. It began broadcasting on November 11, 1969.

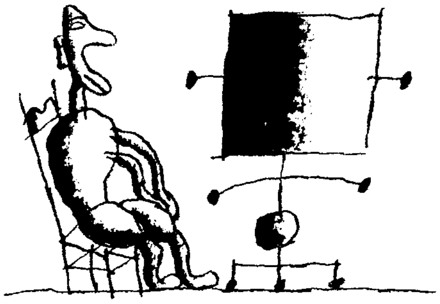
The relationship between Jim Henson Productions and C.T.W. has always been simultaneously simple and complex. Henson by nature preferred handshake agreements to convoluted legal contracts. He was a canny businessman, according to his associates, but the deals he entered into were always based first on personal trust. Although "Sesame Street" eventually spawned the usual complement of fine print, it was born in a personal understanding between Henson and Joan Ganz Cooney, a C.T.W. founder and president. When problems arose, Henson and Cooney ironed them out over a friendly lunch. A comparable alliance between two other companies might have kept a suite of lawyers busy around the clock, but Henson's style was different, and the essentially personal nature of the relationship between the two companies is probably one explanation for the longevity of the show, which is now nearly a quarter century old.

SHORTLY after "Sesame Street" began, the Hensons left Greenwich for a big, modern house in Armonk, New York. The children now had a neighborhood full of potential friends. They also continued to pursue the sort of projects that had occupied them in Greenwich. Brian once spent a week building a series of tubes, ramps, and troughs through which he could roll a marble from his bedroom to the garage. He and his brother, John, developed a fondness for minibikes and motorcycles. Lisa was bookish, artistic, and—as the only child with a bedroom of her own—somewhat aloof. Cheryl loved to draw and sew, and she spent a great deal of time looking after her baby sister, Heather, with whom she shared a room.

The second major milestone in the history of Jim Henson's company came in the mid-seventies, when he began discussing ideas for a television show with Michael Eisner, who was then a young executive at ABC. Like "Sesame Street," the show would feature Muppets, but it would be aimed at adults as much as at children. Henson wanted to call it "The Muppet Show: Sex and Violence." ABC produced two pilots, in 1974 and 1975, but decided not to pick up the show. CBS and NBC weren't interested, either.

"The show was so wacky, so out of left field, that the networks didn't want anything to do with it," Brian says today. "It was very edgy material. Of course, it wasn't really about sex and violence. It was the Muppet version of sex and violence. But it made fun of television and advertising, and it was different from anything else that was on, and nobody wanted it."

The show might have ended there if the second pilot had not been seen by Lord Lew Grade, a British independent producer. Grade offered to shoot a season's worth of episodes at his studios in London. He told Henson that they could circumvent the American networks by selling the show directly to local stations in first-run syndication. Grade and Henson became partners, and "The Muppet Show," which went on the air September 26, 1976, rapidly became one of the first truly global television programs. At its peak, in the late seventies, it was seen every week by two hundred and thirty-five million viewers in over a hundred countries.



As the years went by, the children's involvement in their father's company grew beyond making occasional forays to the workshop. They got used to seeing their ideas, their toys, their pets, and themselves on television. During school vacations, they often went with their father to New York or London. On family vacations, they sometimes helped him flesh out ideas for new movies or television shows. "The Dark Crystal"—Henson's first non-Muppet feature, released in 1982—was conceived in 1978 by Henson and Cheryl in a motel near Kennedy Airport when a snowstorm delayed their flight to London.

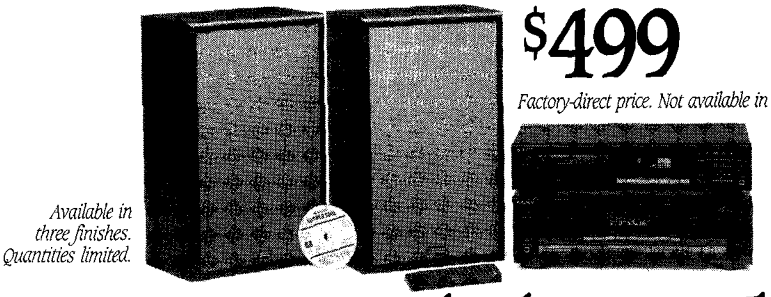
During this same period, the Hensons' marriage was deteriorating. The puppetry business had once been a cozy joint enterprise, but now it had grown so big that in some ways it overwhelmed the relationship. Jim Henson spent more and more time in London, and less and less time in Armonk. He and Jane were legally separated in 1986, but he had actually stopped living at home a couple of years before that. As Henson became a celebrity and drifted out of the orbit of his family, he maintained a relationship with his children primarily by including them in his work.

JIM HENSON PRODUCTIONS now has offices in New York, London, and Los Angeles. The office in New York is the oldest, and it remains the corporate heart of the company. It occupies a handsome brick town house on East Sixty-ninth Street. The town house is the kind that makes people who hate New York think that living in New York might be O.K. after all if only they could live in a house like that. It was built in 1929 for a wealthy banker, who lived in it alone except for eight servants. Jim Henson bought it in 1977 with proceeds from "The Muppet Show." The interior of the house is dominated by a four-story spiral staircase, which Henson referred to as a "vertical telephone." Offices and conference rooms radiate from the staircase, and you can stand on almost any step and monitor the comings and goings of most of the people in the building. Filling the well of the staircase is a sculpture called "The Great Hot Air Balloon Circus." It was created in 1982-83 by John Henson, the second youngest of the children, who was then eighteen, and an artist friend of his named John Kahn.

Brian Henson's office is on the third floor. When he is not on location, he spends about a third of his work time in New York, dividing the rest between his office in London and his main office, in Los Angeles. While he is in residence, he can often be seen loping up and down the staircase looking for someone he needs to talk to, trying to find a script he needs to read, or running over to the Hensons' small photo-and-video studio (down the street from the town house) to see how a business-film shoot is going. Brian is six feet one and looks taller. His hair is longish and wavy, and his features are big. He doesn't so much sit in a chair as seem to strap it to the floor, his long legs and arms draped over the sides. With a beard, he would look a little like his father, but his metabolism is tuned several notches higher. Brian, who is married to the British fashion designer Ellis Flyte, is friendly and easy to talk to, and he seems less like a major entertainment executive than like, for example, the kid from up the street who cuts your lawn.

"My father took us with him all the time," Brian told me not long ago, during a brief stopover in New York on his way from London, which he considers his home, to Los Angeles. "Any weekend he was shooting, any time we were off from school, all the time. People who worked with my father got used to seeing him with his kids, and my mother could bring us in and drop us off and know that we would be fine. My father raised us to be very independent, and the company was like an extended family."

Brian has wrestled with competing urges all his life. Partly as a result of his father's efforts to include the children in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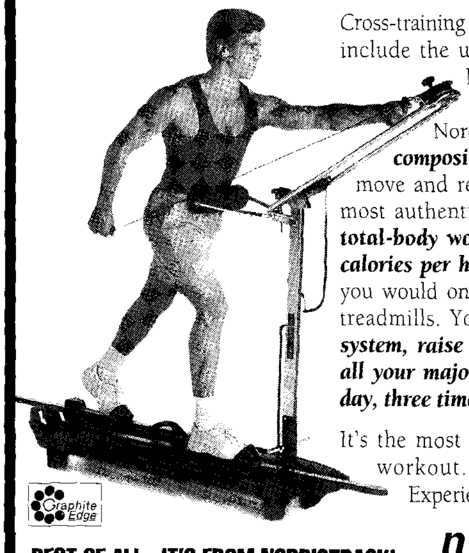
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his work, he has felt a strong attraction to puppetry; partly as a result of a powerful desire to be his own man, he made his first serious foray into puppetry not with Muppets but with marionettes. A marionette is in many ways the opposite of a Muppet. It is operated from above and from a distance, and it doesn't necessarily look so good on TV, and it requires skills of a performer that are very different from the ones that Jim Henson invented. Becoming a skilled marionettist, as Brian did as a teen-ager, was his way of declaring independence without jumping ship.

In 1980, when he was seventeen, Brian spent his summer vacation in London, where his father was shooting "The Great Muppet Caper." This was the second Muppet film, and the first feature that Jim Henson directed. Brian loved working on the movie, but being the director's son made him uncomfortable. He did odd jobs on the set and was careful to refer to his father not as Dad but as Jim. However, his effort to maintain a low profile ended when it came time to shoot a complicated scene in which Kermit and Miss Piggy were to be shown riding bicycles. Jim Henson wasn't sure how to film the scene, since any shot other than a closeup would expose the puppeteers. Someone suggested shooting the scene with marionettes. That idea seemed promising, but none of Henson's performers had had much experience with string puppets.

"When marionettes were mentioned, I suddenly got all enthusiastic," Brian recalls. "It was a different use of marionettes from what people had done before, and I began throwing around some ideas, and before I knew it I was doing the scene. I worked off the top of a big, moving crane, riding a bicycle from fifty feet up. It was very challenging, and it was quite fun, because it was a complicated problem and we solved it. Then I went back to school."

School at that time was Phillips Academy, in Andover, and there, too, Brian was wrestling with the problem of being the son of an increasingly famous person. He didn't like the way people treated him when they found out who his father was, and he didn't enjoy coping with classmates who wanted to be friends with him only because they had seen his father in an American Express commercial. He also had to endure his share of "Sesame Street" jokes. After Andover, Brian planned to go to Wesleyan University. At the last minute, in a characteristic act of independence—Lisa and Cheryl had gone to Harvard and Yale, respectively—he enrolled at the University of Colorado.

"I told people that I was going there because of its Physics Department, but the real reason was probably that I just wanted to relax the academic pressure a bit," he says. "Then, one day, I just got fed up with school. Something clicked, and I said, 'I need to stop this school thing and do something to completion, professionally,' so I left Colorado and headed back to Wesleyan. But I never got there. That summer, I worked on 'Fraggle Rock,' here in New York, and one day, over in the workshop, Faz Fazakas—who had sort of taken over after Don Sahlin died—said, 'Brian, come and help me figure out how to do this.' He was working on some of the mechanical-puppeteering techniques that we were getting into then—radio-controlled eyes, and things like that. I had always liked building things, and what he was doing was very interesting, and he taught me how to put together the motors and mechanisms that make the puppets work."

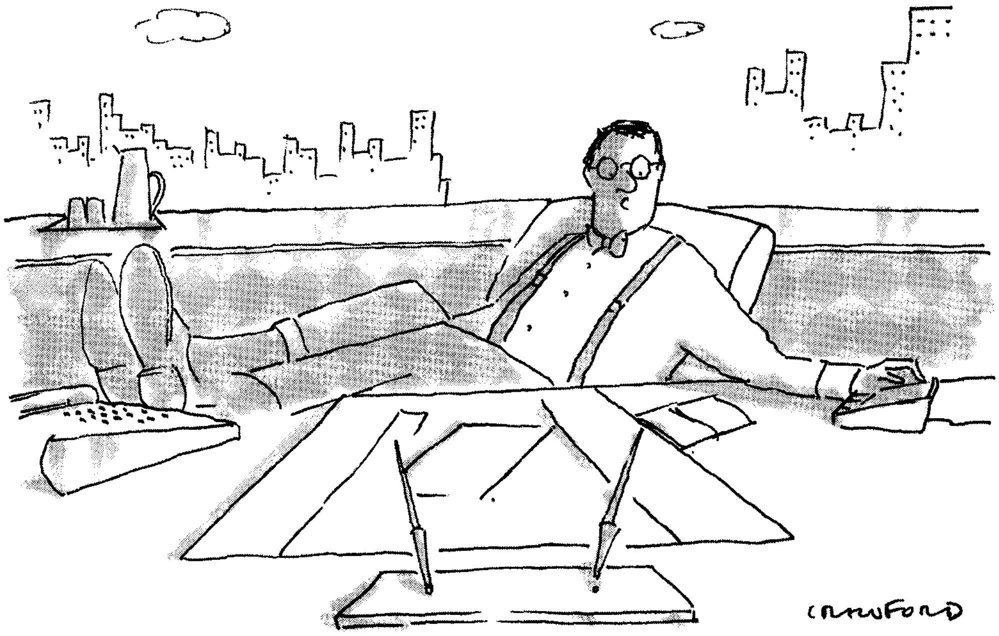
Because Brian was still uneasy in his role as the boss's son, he took advantage of the skills he learned in the workshop to audition for jobs outside the company, and in 1984 he won a puppetry and special-effects assignment in "Return to Oz," which was being produced by Disney. Two additional outside jobs followed, and his reputation grew. Working independently of his father gave him confidence in his own skills and also increased his admiration for what his father had accomplished. In 1985, with three non-Henson movies under his belt, he rejoined the company to work on "Labyrinth."

"Labyrinth" was a disappointment at the box office (as "The Dark Crystal" had been three years before), and its mediocre showing surprised and saddened Jim Henson. Quite a few of the puppets and special effects created for it are extremely sophisticated. Probably the most interesting of the puppets is a grotesquely evil blob named Hoggle. Brian helped to create Hoggle, and he was the head of the crew of puppeteers that operated it. Hoggle, which was capable of subtle facial expression, was the most complicated puppet that the Hensons had created up to that time, and it was a direct precursor of the computer-controlled puppets that are the stars of more recent Henson productions, including the television show "Dinosaurs." With "Labyrinth," Brian assumed a position of genuine importance within the company, and one that he was beginning to feel he had earned.

Brian's base of operations in those days was a subsidiary of Jim Henson Productions called Jim Henson's Creature Shop, in London. In addition to designing and building puppets in the shop, Brian made a series of short films based on Mother Goose rhymes for the Henson company, and directed the second unit on the first Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles movie. With the Mother Goose and Ninja Turtles films, Brian felt that he had completed his apprenticeship as a filmmaker. He found that he loved directing, and he began to think that that was what he wanted to do with the rest of his professional life.

WHILE Brian was building a career at the Creature Shop, Jim Henson was moving his company in a dramatically new direction. In 1989, Henson had had a fateful conversation with his old friend Michael Eisner, who a decade before had been instrumental in persuading ABC to make the pilots for what eventually became "The Muppet Show." Eisner was now the chairman of the Walt Disney Company, and Henson asked him if Disney would be interested in buying his company. For a long time, Henson had deeply admired the Walt Disney Company. When people asked him why there wasn't a Muppet theme park somewhere, he would say that he could never hope to compete with Disney, whose parks were brilliantly conceived and managed. He was also impressed by the way Disney had maintained and built upon Walt Disney's original stable of characters.

When Henson first began to discuss the possibility of merging with Disney, some of his associates were concerned.



“Sandy, could you step in here and put my feet back down on the floor, please?”

One was Michael K. Frith, who is the company’s artistic director. Frith has been with the company since 1975, when Henson persuaded him, after a couple of years of trying, to leave his job as a children’s-book editor at Random House. Frith is an inspired comic illustrator. The walls of his office on East Sixty-ninth Street are hidden by layers of drawings of puppets, characters, props, movie sets, toys, and licensed products. He is fifty-one years old and has silvery hair and a neatly trimmed beard. I asked him recently what had initially attracted Henson to Disney.

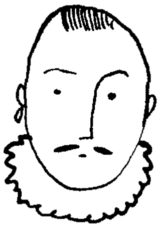
“I had been to Walt Disney World with him, and he loved the place,” Frith said. “He loved the carny aspect of it. That whole world appealed to him—the noise, the lights, the shouting, the come-on—and I think a slightly impish part of his nature enjoyed the idea of bringing in people and turning their perceptions inside out, suspending people’s sense of reality for a while, and sending them away happier for having been through the experience. I also think Jim had determined that the company needed to have a presence in Hollywood—after having resisted that idea all his life. Also, quite frankly, I think he enjoyed being treated like a star. He would go out to Hollywood and be wined and dined and shown the town, and people would ask him for his autograph, and I think there was a part of his nature that responded to that, possibly. But the real bottom line, I suppose, was that he was sick and tired of the business side of running a company. It had come to be so filled with problems and complications that he just decided to sell the whole damn thing and let somebody else deal with it. All the same, there had been times when Jim was less than laudatory about Disney, so it really came as quite a surprise when he suddenly announced that this deal was virtually a fait accompli. Later, I think he had some doubts. At a meeting just before he died, he referred to the Disney merger as ‘the goddam deal,’ which for Jim was *extremely* powerful language. I think by that point he was exhausted by all the machinations and by his inability to move things forward.”

The two companies may have simply been too different to merge. Henson’s organization was loose and nonhierarchical; as one employee put it, “there was Jim, and there was everybody else.” Henson managed his company not by issuing edicts but by subtly nudging everyone toward his own, usually unstated position. The informality could be confusing, even to those who knew him well. Employees were sometimes uncertain about precisely what their responsibilities were. The Walt Disney Company, in contrast, seemed to Henson to consist of layer after layer of vice-presidents and lawyers. Decisions made at the corporate level had to be affirmed by the heads of separate divisions, whose interests were sometimes in conflict.

The differences between the two companies were apparent from the beginning. In October of 1989, a few months after the merger was announced, Henson took a dozen puppeteers, writers, and executives to Orlando for a sort of orientation meeting with Disney. The Henson group got a behind-the-scenes tour of Walt Disney World, then assembled in a conference room for a meeting with Jeffrey Katzenberg, who is the chairman of Walt Disney Studios. According to those who were there, Henson told Katzenberg that he was pleased with the way things were going but that Disney was being unnecessarily aggressive in its dealings with his company and that Disney’s lawyers seemed to keep changing the terms of the agreement. All he wanted, he said, was a fair deal. Katzenberg laughed, people who were at the meeting remember, and accused Henson of being stuck in the sixties. In Hollywood, he said, he had learned to approach negotiations like an Israeli commando: for every one of yours you lose, you take ten of theirs.

To Henson’s creative types, who were used to following their whims under the amiable guidance of a leader who literally never raised his voice, Katzenberg’s speech was like a bolt from another dimension. Katzenberg’s intention may have been simply to assure Henson’s people that they were now under the protection of a corporation that knew how to throw its weight around in Hollywood, but most of them didn’t see things that way. Other clashes followed. For example, it is virtually an article of faith at Jim Henson Productions that a puppet and its performer are indivisible. No one but Frank Oz has ever performed Miss Piggy; no one but Caroll Spinney has ever performed Big Bird. (Kermit is now performed exclusively by a Henson veteran named Steve Whitmire, who does not try to sound exactly like Jim Henson.) Some of the Henson people seemed to feel that Disney had plans to dub voices and use puppeteers less as individual performers than as interchangeable animators. They were worried that in Disney's view Muppets were simply characters—an idea alien to Henson.

To Disney, meanwhile, Henson and his band of performers must have come to seem unspeakably naïve. In order to survive into a second generation, Jim Henson Productions would have to sacrifice some of the mom-and-pop intimacy that had characterized the company since its founding. Did Henson actually believe that none of his characters should outlive their performers? Despite the logic of these sentiments, Disney clearly made a strategic error in failing to fully respect Henson's outlook, which was so different from that of Disney—and, indeed, that of much of the rest of Hollywood. To Henson and his associates, the Muppets were not products; they were friends.



Henson may never have truly resigned himself to making all the sacrifices that a merger would entail, and his willingness to personally become a major part of the Disney organization may never have been very strong. A close associate told me that Henson expected to be able to disentangle himself from Disney in the future if things didn't work out to his satisfaction.

During the negotiations, Henson frequently sought the advice of his eldest daughter, Lisa, who at the time was a rapidly rising star at Warner Brothers. Lisa had gone to Hollywood after graduating from Harvard, where she had been the first female president of the *Harvard Lampoon*. (Among her contemporaries on the *Lampoon* were Mike Reiss and Al Jean, who are now the executive producers of "The Simpsons," and Conan O'Brien, who recently succeeded David Letterman as the host of NBC's "Late Night.") Like her brothers and sisters, she had spent many weekends and vacations working alongside her father.

"I had worked as a production assistant on 'The Dark Crystal,' and my father was constantly taking me to meetings," Lisa says today. "Once, when I was in college, he took me with him to pitch an idea to Sherry Lansing, who was the president of production of Twentieth Century Fox. I think he felt that Sherry would be a good role model for me. I didn't think anything of it at the time, because my father was always doing things like that, but I'm astonished when I think about it now. I took pitches at Warner Brothers for nine years, and nobody ever brought a kid along. But my father always included us in whatever he did, and we didn't think twice about speaking up. As a result, when I went to Hollywood after college, I went with the idea that my opinion would automatically count."

At Warner Brothers, Lisa began as an executive assistant to Mark Canton, who is now the chairman of Columbia Pictures, and Lucy Fisher, who had graduated from Harvard a decade before. Rapidly, Lisa became a vice-president, then a senior vice-president, then an executive vice-president. Last year, she surprised Hollywood by resigning, saying that she needed a break after ten years on the fast track. She spent part of her brief retirement fixing up her new house in Los Angeles, and travelling in Tibet, where she was joined for a time by her sister Heather. Early this month, Columbia Pictures announced that she had agreed to replace Michael Nathanson, Columbia's president of production—a job for which she had been recruited by her old boss, Mark Canton.

In addition to making her a major figure in Hollywood, Lisa's new position greatly strengthens the role that she has played in her family's business. "I've always been the outsider-insider," she said the other day. "I'm involved in the company, but I've always worked outside it. My role in Jim Henson Productions has always been partly to provide an objective view of how Hollywood works and how the company fits in. That was the role I played when my father was alive, and it has been even more true since he died." When Lisa became a senior vice-president at Warner Brothers, in 1990, Canton timed the promotion so that the announcement would appear in *Daily Variety* on May 9th, her thirtieth birthday. A few days before the promotion, Jim Henson flew to New York on business. He had a sore throat. A couple of days later, he and Cheryl flew to North Carolina to visit his father and stepmother. On the way back to New York, he had to stop in the airport to rest, and Cheryl began to worry that something was very wrong. He felt worse the next day, and spent most of it in bed. That night, he asked Jane—from whom he had been separated since the mid-eighties, but with whom he had kept in touch—to stay with him. He had a terrible night, and Jane urged him to let her take him to a hospital. He resisted for a long time. Then, shortly before dawn, he agreed. Doctors discovered a raging streptococcal infection that had spread throughout his lungs. Less than twenty-four hours later, he was dead.

IMMEDIATELY after her father's death, Lisa went to work on the Disney negotiations. The family's lawyers had decided that maintaining momentum was crucial, and Lisa felt that she owed it to her father to bring the merger into being. For more than six months, the merger had been treated by both sides and all observers as a done deal. The fact is, however, that the negotiations had become increasingly complex, and Henson's death now brought on enormous further complications.

Not long ago, I spoke with Lisa about the Disney deal at her father's old apartment in New York. (It was there that he spent his last night before going to the hospital.) The apartment is on a high floor of the Sherry Netherland Hotel, and it has what must be one of the ten best views in New York. Large windows in the living room look west across Fifty-ninth Street and north up Fifth Avenue, between them framing all of Central Park. The apartment now serves as a sort of central meeting place for the far-flung Henson children and their mother. It is furnished as it was when Jim Henson owned it, with beautiful handmade pieces by contemporary American furniture makers, pre-Columbian artifacts, and props from "The Dark Crystal." Some of the pre-Columbian artifacts are hard to distinguish from some of the props for "The Dark Crystal." Lisa, like her sisters, is tall, slender, and attractive. She has shoulder-length red hair. Like Brian, she seems to have more energy than she can consistently find a useful outlet for. We sat in the living room, and I asked her about the Disney deal.

"I was very much interested in seeing that deal happen," she said. "I thought that it was a very good idea, and I had spent a lot of time talking with my father about how it could work. After he died, I carried the torch for a long time." She laughed, a note of exasperation in her voice. "Now, in retrospect, it seems clear that the company didn't need to merge with Disney, and that my father would have been happier to see things turn out the way they have. At the time, though, we all felt that we should carry on and make it happen, because we believed that it was what he had wanted. As it turned out, the deal was probably doomed from the start. My father was the easiest person in the world to get along with, and yet in a year of talking face-to-face with Disney even he hadn't been able to make it happen."

Whether or not the deal was doomed from the start, it was almost certainly doomed from the moment Jim Henson died. For the Disney Company, the prospect of acquiring the services of an active, fully engaged Jim Henson had been tantalizing. Now that Henson was gone, how much was his company worth? (No exact figure was ever agreed on, but the original deal is said to have been worth between a hundred and two hundred million dollars.) Jim Henson's death obviously had consequences for the Henson side of the deal as well. While the merger might now be worth less to Disney, it was likely to cost Henson's heirs a great deal more. The Henson estate's tax bill was going to be enormous. To make the deal comparable in value to the one that had originally been discussed, Disney would have had to pay more. To the Hensons, it seemed as though Disney were trying to renegotiate issues that had already been settled; to Disney, it seemed as though the Hensons were being unrealistic.

"The merger didn't work because Jim died," Michael Eisner told me recently. "That's the bottom line. He died the day before he was to sign the agreement. Then it became a question of whether we still wanted to proceed with the deal, which we did. But then Uncle Sam stepped in with his hand out, and it became apparent that it would be impossible to complete the transaction as it stood. It just wasn't meant to be at that time."

The deal finally came apart in December of 1990. After several days of negotiations in New York, Frank Wells, who is Disney's president, announced that in order for the merger to take place the price would have to be reduced by several millions of dollars. The Hensons were shocked, and rejected the proposal. They made a counteroffer, and Disney rejected that. Wells and his negotiating team returned to California.

The break between Disney and the Hensons was far from clean. One aspect of the proposed merger which had been very attractive to both sides was the possibility of adding the Muppets to the stable of Disney characters at Disney's theme parks. After the merger negotiations ended, the two sides still tried to come to an agreement that would permit Disney to use certain Muppets in two attractions at Walt Disney World. Those efforts were unavailing. Disney, however, had already begun to use the Henson characters—and to label itself as the copyright owner—in promotional materials and on T-shirts and other products. In one brochure for Walt Disney World, for example, a caption referred to various Muppets as "favorite Disney characters." The Hensons demanded that these unlicensed uses of the Muppets be halted. When Disney persisted, the Hensons sued.

The Hensons' complaint is luridly readable. It accused Disney not only of infringing various trademarks and copyrights but also of engaging in "overreaching, deception, and other highly inequitable conduct" throughout the negotiations. It alleged that Disney had fraudulently "concocted a series of excuses" to keep the Hensons working on a multimedia show for Walt Disney World called "Jim Henson's Muppet-Vision 3-D" even though at that point Disney no longer intended to complete the merger without millions of dollars in givebacks. Frank Wells' demand for a reduction in price, the Hensons said, had been delayed until the "Muppet-Vision" show had been virtually completed. This delay, according to the Hensons, enabled Disney "to obtain the technological and creative resources and know-how of Henson Associates and

NJ wore khakis.

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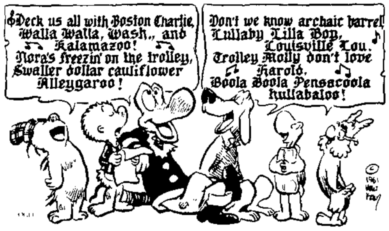
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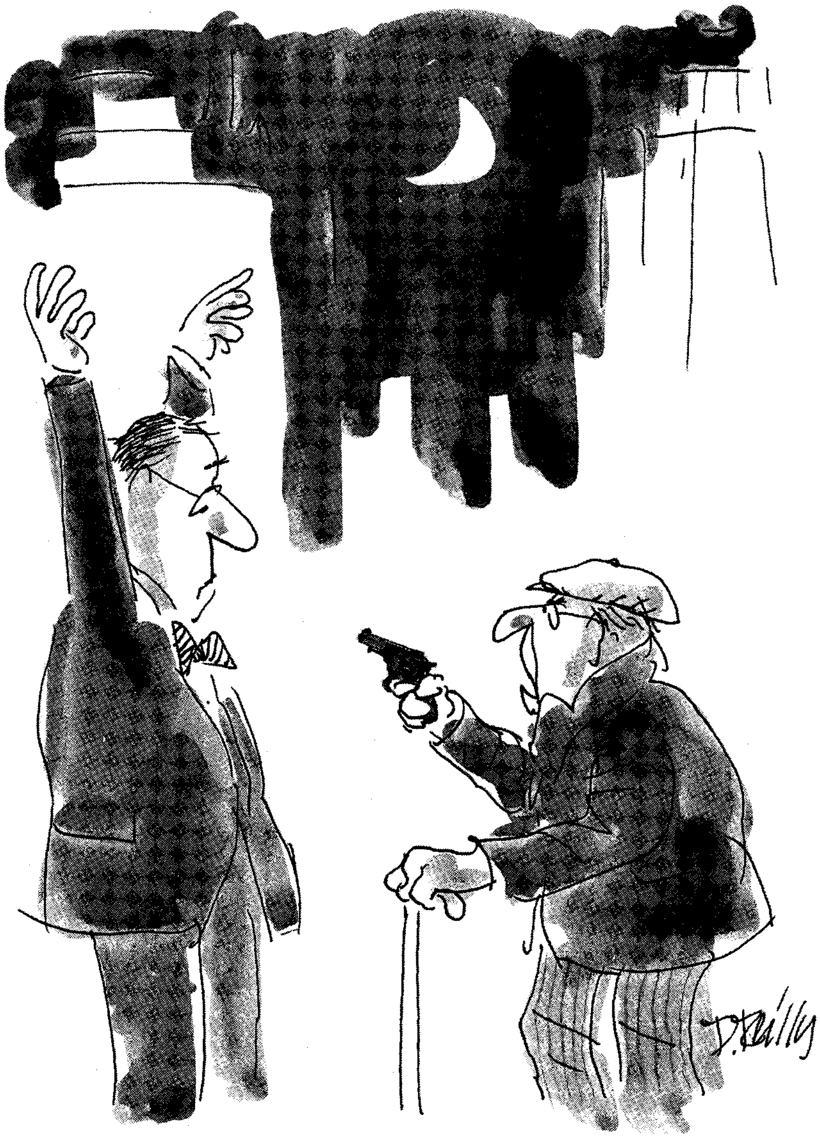
Disney responded with a countersuit, and the legal battle continued through heated meetings and various motions and countermotions. It all eventually ended without a trial. Both sides are forbidden by the settlement to discuss its terms, but the Hensons clearly got what they wanted. Disney apologized for a "serious misunderstanding," stopped treating the Muppets as its property, and obtained a license for the Henson characters that do appear at Walt Disney World. Despite the acrimony, both companies came out ahead. "MuppetVision 3-D" was one of Jim Henson's favorite projects at the time of his death, and it continues to be a hot attraction at the park.

The lawsuit was the Henson children's trial by fire. At the time, many observers assumed that Disney would simply steamroller the Hensons on its way to getting exactly what it wanted. But the Hensons stood their ground, and their out-of-court settlement was the first clear sign to outsiders that they were capable both of leading their father's company and of winning a Hollywood battle royal. Ultimately, there were benefits for Disney as well. Both companies had the foresight to realize that some sort of continuing relationship would be extremely useful. Even as the merger negotiations were falling apart, the Hensons and Eisner reached an agreement whereby Disney would provide financial support for the TV series "Dinosaurs," which Jim Henson had conceived of in the last months of his life, and which is now in its third season. (Brian is a co-executive producer of the show, and when he is in Los Angeles he often directs episodes.) Other friendly and profitable deals have followed. "The Muppet Christmas Carol," which was directed by Brian, was distributed by Disney; reruns of the Henson television show "Fraggle Rock" appear on the Disney Channel; a Disney subsidiary distributes Henson home videos. Representatives of both companies now have only nice things to say about each other.

Despite the creative disruptions and emotional turmoil they caused, the failed merger negotiations and subsequent lawsuits provided a large dose of instant adulthood for the Henson children. Disney served as a sort of necessary opponent to be engaged and conquered. By the time matters were settled, all five Hensons had had a crash course in the way their father's company operated, and they had learned probably more than they wanted to know about what happens when big companies collide. Even more important, their favorable settlement with Disney gave them confidence in their ability to get along in the business world without their father's guidance. Immediately after Jim Henson's death, the presidency of the company had fallen to David Lazer, a former I.B.M. executive and trustee for some of the children, who had been one of Jim Henson's closest friends and had agreed to act as a sort of corporate steward. Shortly after the merger negotiations ended, Lazer turned his responsibilities over to Brian, who had been selected to succeed him.

Ron Powers, who has written a biography of Jim Henson that will be published by Random House next year, told me that Brian underwent a transformation upon agreeing to run the company. "When the Hensons were children, they did a lot of family things together, and one of the things they did was go kite flying at the beach," Powers said. "Brian told me that he always found himself the string gatherer—he was always the one who was sorting out the knots and tangles. That became a metaphor for what was later almost the burden of his career—untangling all these knotty questions of the fate and fortune of the company. Professionally, he didn't want



"Sorry, friend, but if they're going to mess with entitlements I'm going to need a little cushion."

to be in his father's shadow, but inevitably he was drawn back to the company. Then Jim died, and Brian realized that he was going to have to be his father's successor—not artistically but in terms of the future of the company. And I think he really made a kind of noble sacrifice of his own artistic hopes, and then, before the age of thirty, brilliantly managed the company back from the brink of oblivion."

IN a small recording studio on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, Robert Kraft had just figured out what was missing. "That's good," he said, "but I think you should let the chicken develop a little more." His assistant rolled back the tape.

In the glass-enclosed recording booth, Steve Whitmire, wearing big headphones, nodded and said, "Maybe I can establish the chicken sooner." He practiced a few clucks, and made a note on his score. Whitmire is in his thirties, and has been a Muppet performer for fifteen years; his numerous characters include Rizzo the Rat and, since November of 1990, after Jim Henson's death, Kermit the Frog.

"O.K.," said Kraft. "Let's go again, same punch."

Whitmire tried again, and this time sounded sufficiently henlike. Despite the setback, everything was going very smoothly, and the session was ahead of schedule. The only other significant hangup had come fifteen minutes before, when Dave Goelz (whose best-known character is Gonzo) cracked up while singing, "I'm going to drink a lot of coffee, spend a little cash,/make that girl love me, when I put out some trash." But when you're recording "Sugar Shack" with Gonzo, a rat, and a chicken you don't expect to do the whole thing in one take.

Robert Kraft is the vice-president of music for Jim Henson Productions and the head of Jim Henson Records, a new label. He joined the company last year. Kraft's job grew out of a meeting with Alex Rockwell, who is thirty years old and is the company's head of development.

"I had just finished writing and producing the soundtrack for 'Mambo Kings,'" Kraft told me when the recording session was over. "I met Alex at a lunch, and I asked her whether Henson

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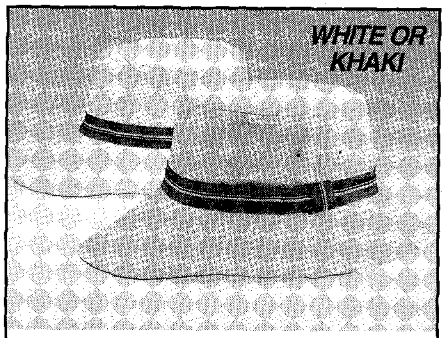

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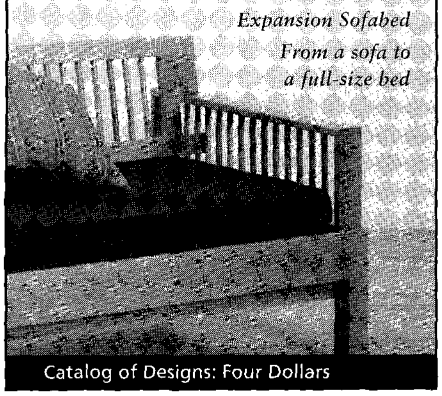

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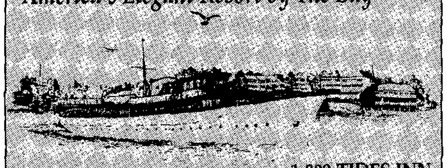

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had a record company or a music department. I assumed that it did, but she said that it didn't, and maybe we should talk about it. I was busy then, and six or eight months went by, and I sort of assumed that she had forgotten it. But she hadn't. I called, and we decided that I would spend six months going through the Henson archives, just to see if there was enough of a music library to make a label. What I found was unbelievable. I kept asking, 'Did Jim Henson ever sleep?' Because there is more than thirty years' worth of really priceless music that was never released but should have been. What many people don't realize is that Jim, in addition to making television shows and movies, recorded endlessly. Alex told me that the two of them would fly to London, and she would be exhausted when they got there, but Jim would go straight from the plane to CBS. Alex would stretch out on a couch in the studio and try to sleep, and Jim would spend hours recording Rowlf songs"—Rowlf being the floppy-eared dog Muppet. "It was an incredible output, and not only in terms of quantity. One of the things that Jim Henson doesn't get enough credit for is his singing. A lot of the Rowlf stuff is really superb."

The creation of the Henson record label is typical of the changes made by Brian and his staff. Jim Henson's focus was almost always on his current project, or on the one after that. He loved recording songs as Rowlf, for example, but once the songs were recorded he typically moved on to something else. As a result, there was a haphazard quality to the company's marketing while he was alive. (The soundtracks of "The Muppet Movie" and "The Great Muppet Caper" had been allowed to go out of print until earlier this year.) Brian has continued to pursue new projects, but he has also made a systematic effort to mine the vast library of unexploited material, some of which dates back nearly thirty years.

One of the architects of the new approach is Charles Rivkin, the company's chief operating officer and Brian's closest business colleague. Rivkin is based in Los Angeles, and he and Brian speak or meet every day. Rivkin wears suits, has neatly parted short brown hair, and looks like a graduate of the Harvard Business School, which he is. Like most of the other people in positions of importance in the company today, he was born in the early sixties. (He turned thirty-one in April.) After college, he was a numbers cruncher at Salomon Brothers. Then he went to Harvard, and while he was there he decided he wanted to work in the entertainment industry. After hearing a presentation by a Henson executive, he talked his way into an interview and then into a job.

"Jim hired me as a strategic planner, which was something the company had never had," he told me. "The job was a lot of fun, because virtually every problem the company had at that point was a case study in some sort of standard business problem, and I could see tangible results from putting in place exactly the sort of basic principles I had learned in business school." Jim Henson Productions had become very large very quickly, but its planning, accounting, and budgeting procedures lagged behind. Coming to work there was an M.B.A.'s dream.

The general strategy that the Hensons and Rivkin have devised involves leveraging their own relatively limited resources by forming partnerships with other companies. Thus, BMG Kidz, which is the children's division of the Bertelsmann Music Group, handles the distribution of Jim Henson Records; Disney handles the distribution of Henson Home Video; and Hasbro and a few other toy companies internationally license Muppet toys. More recently, Rivkin and Brian have been working to build a market for Henson products in Japan, where the Muppet characters are known because "Sesame Street" has been popular for many years but where the Henson company's productions are mostly unknown. As a result of all these deals, the company has been able to increase its earnings substantially just by making better use of existing assets. The deals permitted the company to move very rapidly from near-hibernation to a state of furious and profitable activity. Brian has secured exactly the sort of creative freedom that his father used to yearn for, and he hasn't had to sell the company to do it. James J. Cramer, who is an independent money manager and a columnist for *Smart Money*, says, "Henson Productions is very closely held, so it's hard to find solid financial information, but I think it may be one of the most lucrative entertainment companies in the country, if not the most lucrative—and deservedly so. Their up-front costs are low, and everyone pays them royalties. They're the only company in America involved with both education and toys that is not a software company. It's a great company. And it's a gold mine."

WHILE Jim Henson's business was in turmoil, shortly before and after his death, one part of it that seemed particularly vulnerable was the Muppet involvement in C.T.W.'s "Sesame Street." The show could theoretically run for years without new material, because a substantial part of each new episode consists of old segments, but the show's producers still rely heavily on Jim Henson Productions, which provides both puppets and performers. During the Disney negotiations, there was a danger that "Sesame Street" would get lost in the shuffle. That it didn't is due largely to Cheryl Henson.

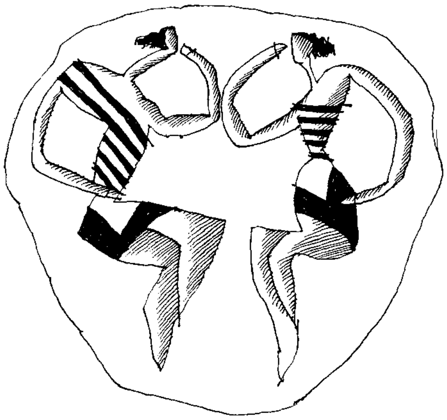
"I got involved with 'Sesame Street' shortly after my dad died," Cheryl said the other day. "I started working in the show's production department, and I've been working there part time ever since, in addition to the other things I do. At the time of the Disney deal, there was a lot of focus on the classic Muppet characters and on 'Fraggle Rock,' but no one was paying much attention to 'Sesame Street.' And I thought someone needed to, because I was really struck by the impact and the importance of those characters, by their strength in the culture."

Of all the Henson children, Cheryl may come the closest to embodying her father's gentle idealism. Jim Henson liked to make people laugh, but his aim was to enlighten as much as to entertain, and he believed strongly that the Muppets were a force for good. Brian and Lisa share those convictions, but both have more sheer capitalist cunning than their father had, and both give the impression of feeling far more comfortable than he ever did with the business side of the entertainment world. Cheryl seems different. In a way, she is the conscience of the company.

Cheryl's office is a few paces from Brian's in the New York town house. At one end is a couch piled high with "Sesame Street" toys, which she hands out like business cards. We sat at a table nearby and talked. Like Lisa, whom she resembles, Cheryl is tall, willowy, and attractive, but she seems both less driven and more vulnerable. "Both Brian and Lisa are ambitious and strong," she said. "They are both classic eldest siblings. I'm actually older than Brian is, but Lisa is the eldest daughter and Brian is the eldest son. When I was growing up, I spent a lot of time looking after Heather, who is nine years younger than I am, and I also babysat a lot outside the family, and I took care of a lot of little kids. I think that in some ways doing those things influenced my wanting to work on 'Sesame Street,' and to look after it when it seemed to be in danger. I also think it's good in a family not to have overlapping responsibilities, when that's possible. With us, it started when we were children. Lisa always wanted to be a producer, Brian always wanted to be a performer and a director, and I always wanted to be an artist and a designer. It has always been sort of blocked out, in a funny kind of way."

Between high school and college, Cheryl took a year off to work on "The Dark Crystal." She was deeply attached to the project, since she and her father had sketched out the story together.

The next year, she went to Yale, where she majored in history. Afterward, she spent a summer studying Russian, then went with her father to London to work on "Labyrinth." She also spent six months working as her father's assistant, then left the company to establish an independent professional identity. She got a degree in textile design from the Fashion Institute of Technology, in Manhattan, and won a number of freelance theatrical-costuming and design assignments. She also worked on several other Henson productions, including an innovative television special called "Song of the Cloud Forest," for which she did the over-all design. She had one foot in and one foot out of the company when her father died. Now she works there full time.



In addition to keeping an eye on "Sesame Street," Cheryl looks after the company's philanthropic activities. Ten years ago, her father endowed a small foundation that makes grants to people working in non-Muppet puppetry. Last fall, Cheryl and the foundation organized the first International Festival of Puppet Theatre, which brought seventeen puppeteers from around the world to the Joseph Papp Public Theatre, in New York, for two weeks of sold-out performances. A second festival will be held in the fall of 1994. Cheryl's involvement with the foundation is of a piece with her other activities in the company. She is the guardian of the quieter side of her father's legacy.

IF Cheryl Henson is the conscience of Jim Henson Productions, Jane Henson is its memory. When the Hensons separated—first physically, then legally—in the mid-eighties, Jane gave up her ownership in the company as part of the separation agreement. Jim had a series of girlfriends after he left his wife. But he continued to keep in touch with Jane, and she with him. Through all their difficulties, she never lost interest in him or in the company, which she had helped to create. And he depended on her in times of stress. Nowadays, she can often be found at the Sixty-ninth Street office. She doesn't have an official title, but her specialty is company history, with emphasis on the early years. Brian seems to welcome her in that role, for Jane is now his closest link to what the business was like when he was too young to be aware of it.

On a cold day last spring, Jane drove to Vassar College to take part in Jim Henson Day, an event that had been organized by several Muppet-obsessed undergraduates. So many students wanted to attend her presentation that admission to the auditorium was initially limited to those who had signed up in advance. Jane gave a talk on the history of the company, and showed slides and film clips from the Muppet archives. She also showed a videotaped tour of the workshop which had been made by John Henson.

The most surprising thing about Jane

Henson's presentation was how rapt the undergraduates in her audience were. They laughed at "Sesame Street" clips, cheered wildly when Ernie appeared on the screen, and sang along with "Rubber Duckie." Two smiling young women sitting to my right had tears in their eyes during perhaps a tenth of the presentation, which lasted most of the afternoon. The mood in the room was a little spooky, to tell the truth. The students were also eerily knowledgeable about Muppetiana; when Jane was unable to answer a question about the availability of some early recordings, a young woman in the audience rattled off a list of titles, amazing even Jane.

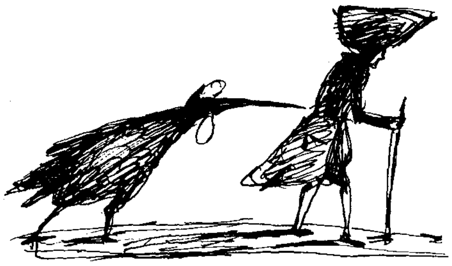
At a reception after the presentation, the students treated Jane less like a celebrity than like a sort of generic visiting mom. The students poured ginger ale for her and gathered around her to ask questions about Kermit. The bond between the Muppets and their ever-renewing audience must be the Henson company's biggest asset. Parents young enough to have watched "Sesame Street" as children tend to think of the show as obligatory viewing for their kids. Once you lock into the psyches of a young audience, you can leave much of the rest of your marketing to them.

I once asked Brian if his youth had ever been a problem in his dealings with bigger, more established companies. "It never has," he said. "What you have to remember is that our business is family entertainment. All of us are older than the bulk of our audience." I realized later that Brian is also too old to have been a member of that first "Sesame Street" generation; although he appeared in a number of "Sesame Street" segments (including one about the number 3 which Jane showed at Vassar), he was already in elementary school by the time the show began. Heather is the only Henson child young enough to have watched "Sesame Street" as a toddler. Of course, as a child of Jim Henson she had an unusual perspective on the show. When she saw Ernie and Bert, she knew that they were connected to the arms of her father *and* Frank Oz. Even more than her brothers and sisters, she is a part of the generation that made her father a star.

Heather hasn't decided yet whether she wants to work at the company. Like her brothers and sisters before her, she seems reluctant to appear to be merely succumbing to the inevitable. But Jim Henson Productions exerts a powerful gravitational pull on all the children. To them, the company represents not only their father's legacy but also, for better or worse, the fabric of their childhoods.

RON POWERS told me that, of all the Henson children, John may be the one who eventually emerges as his father's artistic successor. At the moment, however, John's connection with the company is not particularly strong. He lives in Saugerties, New York, a couple of hours up the Hudson from Manhattan, and, although he takes on occasional freelance assignments for his brother, he spends most of his time working on other projects. Recently, he created some special effects for a Miller-beer commercial, and served as art director for a Freddie Mercury music video. His main creative focus is on his house, a hundred-and-sixteen-year-old brick school building on the Saugerties main drag. For ten years, Henson and a friend have been transforming it into what they envision both as a home for themselves and as a production space for video, film, and sculpture.

John is twenty-eight. He is blond and handsome and is built like an athlete. He looks like one of those Southern California types who divide their time between framing houses and playing Frisbee with their big, happy dogs. His schoolhouse renovation is not your typical home-improvement project. On the day I visited, two sixty-foot steel beams were being guided through a hole in the foundation to take the place of an obtrusive column in the basement, several workers were assembling forms for a concrete retaining wall, a mason was building a high stone wall that will eventually surround most of the block on which the building stands, and a man running a backhoe was digging a trench and moving dirt from one enormous pile to another. Dust was everywhere. The only entirely finished spaces inside the building, after ten years of intermittent but concerted labor, are a couple of bedrooms, high above the ground floor, in a part of the building accessible only by means of a narrow spiral staircase. John Henson's bedroom is small but stunning, with intricate cabinetry, dyed woodwork, painted murals, quirky mosaics, a mirror-framed skylight, built-in sound and video systems, and fibre-optic light fixtures.



"I had a psychiatrist at one point who said to me, 'You know, you won't be able to accomplish anything or finish anything until you finish your house,'" John told me. "And I *just wanted* to slug the guy. He had no conception of the magnitude of this job. I said, 'You don't understand. I'm not finishing that house.' It's a lifetime project. I won't be finished until the day I die, and then somebody else will take it over."

John bought the schoolhouse when he was eighteen, in partnership with his father and his friend John Kahn, the artist with whom he made the balloon sculpture that hangs in the stairwell at the headquarters of Jim Henson Productions. (The other finished room in the house is Kahn's bedroom.) They paid forty-five thousand dollars for the building and its lot, which covers an entire block. On their first visit to it, he and Kahn sketched out a rough floor plan, and they have been at work on it ever since.

John Henson had a classic American tortured adolescence. He hated the smug Republican affluence of Westchester, and he felt that other parents viewed his long-haired, artistic father as a threat. John adored his father, but he also felt the need to be independent. He got a motorcycle when he was thirteen. During the summers, he would roar off after breakfast and not return until dinner. He changed schools nearly every year. He spent eighth grade at an American school in London (where his father was shooting "The Muppet Show") and tenth grade at an alternative boarding school in Massachusetts. Dyslexia made schoolwork difficult. For his junior year, he returned home and enrolled in the big public high school in Mamaroneck, and he told the other students there that his father worked for I.B.M.

After high school, John became a sort of shadow student at New York University's film school. His father gave him a job as the coördinator of the company's video-and-photo studio. In those same years, John was a walking accident. He was injured in a car crash; he had a kidney operation; he had a steel plate inserted in his arm after a skiing accident; and he split his right hand from the base of the little finger almost to the wrist while building a prop for a film. (When you shake hands with him today, his metacarpals shift disconcertingly under your grip.)

John quit his job at the studio shortly after his father died. Around the same time, he broke up with his fiancée. Jim Henson's death may have been especially difficult for John; during the preceding eight months, the two had spent time together in California, where Jim had a house, and in New Mexico, and John had felt for the first time that he and his father were truly confiding in each other. "Our time together was really necessary for me," John said. "I had always been running in ten different directions, and he had always been running in ten different directions, and we had kind of started to get a little too far apart. Then, right at the end, we spent a lot of time together, and we got closer than we had ever been. I felt like somebody. One of these strange blessings, you know?"

Now thoughts of his father are very much in his mind. Toward the end of my visit, he said, "I'm looking forward to getting more involved with the company. I've been doing a lot of projects on my own, and I'd like to go back. I love the company and working with the company, and it's important that family members stay involved."

Not long after we talked, John took a job as a puppeteer in the cast of "CityKids," a new Henson television series, on ABC. If he decides to become more deeply involved in the company, there will be plenty for him to do. Jim Henson Productions not only has its work for "Sesame Street" but currently has five television series of its own—"CityKids," "Dinosaurs," and "Dog City," and, in syndication, "Fraggle Rock" and "Jim Henson's Muppet Babies." Several new movies are in the works, including a live-action "Pinocchio," which is being co-produced by Francis Ford Coppola's Zoetrope Productions; a film version of the Stephen Sondheim musical "Into the Woods"; and a film version of "Dinosaurs." The company's music, home-video, publishing, and meeting-films divisions are busy as well.

Three years ago, Jim Henson Productions seemed to be on the brink of extinction; now it has as much work as it can handle. Charles Rivkin says that almost every week he receives unsolicited inquiries from investment bankers and would-be buyers. In the dark period following Jim Henson's death, such offers were considered carefully. Today, Rivkin politely declines. Brian and the other children have given the company the stability it seemed to have lost. While Jim Henson was alive, they all had to cope to a greater or lesser degree with the difficulty of working in his shadow. Now that they have learned to carry on in his absence, they make a daunting team. Brian and Lisa would both appear prominently on virtually anyone's list of important Hollywood executives—a fact that seems even more remarkable when one considers that Lisa is thirty-three and Brian is twenty-nine. The Henson name will be an important one in American popular culture for many years to come.

Just before I left Saugerties, John told me, "When my dad died, the five of us stood together, and it was sort of like the pieces of a puzzle. The complete picture was my father, and we were the parts. Now we make a complete picture. You can't really put it into words, and I wouldn't want to. But I just sort of feel that it will continue."

David Lazer, who stepped in as interim president following Jim Henson's death, had said something similar to me not long before. "Jim was my best friend," he said. "I have known his children from when they were really very young, and in each of them I see parts of Jim. He is living through them, in a way, and they are extending him. It's a lovely thing to see, really. When you speak to Jim Henson's children, it is almost as though you were speaking to him." ♦

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LETTER FROM BRAZIL

OBSESSED IN RIO

Fact mingles with fantasy on TV Globo, where one soap opera begets a real-life murder—and another helps bring down a President.

BY ALMA GUILLERMOPRIETO

On Tuesday, December 29th, Fernando Collor de Mello became the first President in Brazil's history to be impeached, accused of standing by while his éminence grise fleeced an impoverished population of millions upon millions of dollars on his behalf. The Senate's vote to remove him from office had been preceded by a lengthy investigation, and by a wave of protest that put hundreds of thousands of people on the streets to demand his ouster. Depending on how one looked at it, Fernando Collor's congressional indictment represented either a new and thrilling empowerment of a population no longer willing to put up with reckless arrogance on the part of its leaders or a depressing watershed in this country's long search for decent government. In any event, the nation's future hung in the balance. Unfortunately, the people of Brazil, and particularly the people of Rio de Janeiro, were too distracted to pay much attention while history was being made. Less than twenty-four hours before the final Senate vote, which decided the President's fate, a television starlet had been found dead on a roadside on the outskirts of Rio, her body perforated by sixteen stab wounds. It was this news that galvanized the nation.

The murder of Daniella Perez—twenty-two, conventionally pretty, and irrelevant to the fate of the country—was merely one of almost four thousand homicides that take place in Rio every year. But the widespread shock and outrage at this particular crime completely overshadowed not only the Senate's impeachment vote but Fernando Collor's face-saving letter of resignation. The substance of the nightly newscast on all the networks was devoted to Daniella. Headlines screamed her name. Foreign correspondents covering the impeachment in Brasília fumed at missing the real story in Rio. On the Sunday following the murder, the main papers published special impeachment supplements; at the beach, Brazilians by the thousand tossed the special sections into the garbage and settled down to read the latest on Daniella Perez. Collor was, after all, merely an unloved politician; Daniella was—and remains—a cherished family member for the forty million souls who tuned in every evening at eight-thirty to watch her in her first big role, in the *telenovela* "De Corpo e Alma" ("Body and Soul").

She was not even the star—just a featured player in one of the multiple subplots on which *telenovelas* depend to keep a story going for at least a hundred and eighty daily (except Sunday) chapters. She played Yasmin, a sweet young ticket-puncher on a Rio bus line, whose life was occasionally made difficult by the obsessive, threatening jealousy of her boyfriend, Bira, the bus driver on the line. Within hours of the crime, Guilherme de Pádua, a moody, wooden actor who played Bira, confessed to detectives that he was Daniella's killer. Soon the press was feasting on other ghoulish coincidences between reality and melodrama: One of the subplots featured an older woman who gets involved with a male stripper; it turned out that Guilherme was himself a former male stripper. Guilherme and Daniella were brought together on the set by Daniella's mother, Glória, who is one of the better-known *telenovela* authors, and whose script for "Corpo e Alma" was notoriously lurid. She approved Guilherme de Pádua for the bus driver's role. The romance between the ticket-puncher and the bus driver was initially presented as light comic relief for otherwise *escabroso* goings on, but Glória Perez's own inclination toward the heavily dramatic, and perhaps something she sensed in Guilherme's nature, made her write a disturbing and conflictive screen relationship between him and her daughter, full of jealous confrontations and near-violence.

"Brazilians discovered virtual reality years ago," a friend of mine said recently, commenting on the national reaction to

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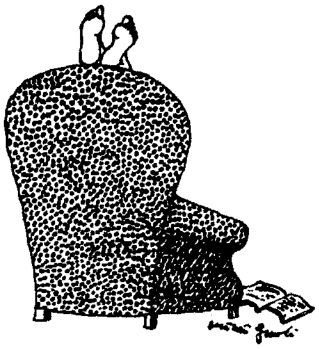

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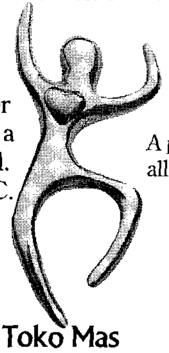

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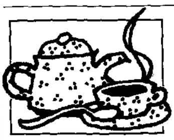

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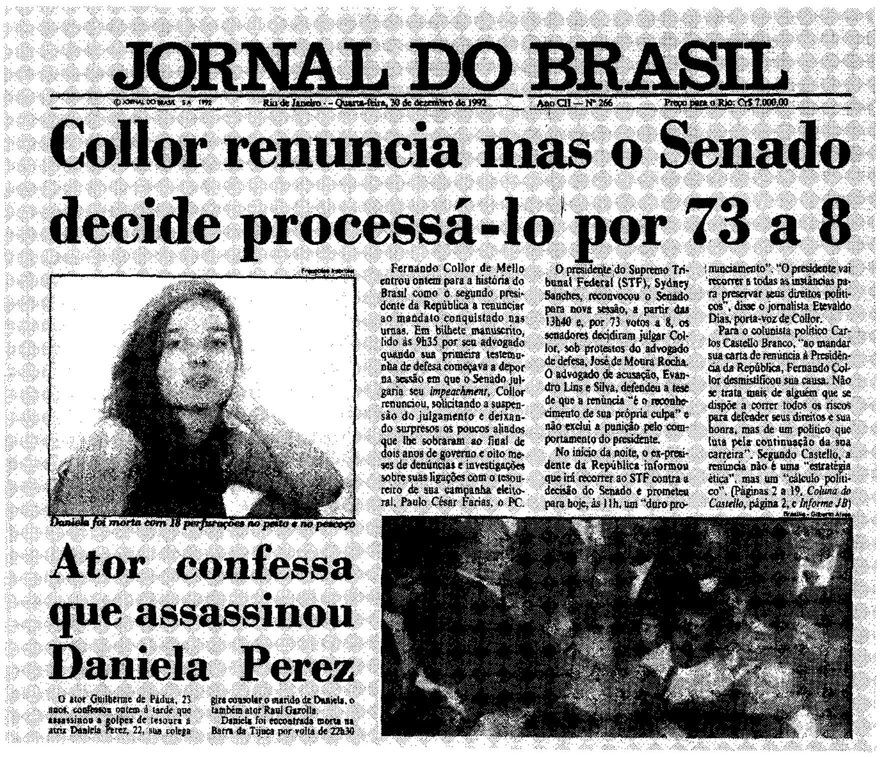
the Daniella Perez murder. "They never know when they are entering the screen and when they are leaving it." The blurry confusion in the public mind between reality and fantasy when it came to the murder scandal—had Guilherme de Pádua killed Yasmin, or was it Bira who had killed Daniella Perez?—turned into full-fledged delirium at Daniella's funeral. It took place the day after the murder, just hours after Fernando Collor de Mello submitted his resignation, and on the kind of sweltering day when everyone in Rio who can afford the bus fare is normally at the beach. Vera Holtz, who in "Corpo e Alma" played the demure, fortyish housewife who falls passionately in love with the male stripper, has vivid memories of the day. "Absolutely everyone from the television company showed up—the stars, the featured actors, the bit players. And then there was the public"—so many people they literally didn't fit. Vera Holtz laughed and shook her head in dismay at the ludicrousness of the scene. "You know, in Brazil even funerals turn into parties—the corpse is out there in the living room, and in the kitchen there are mountains of food and everyone's telling jokes. Well, there was that multitude, and they had come to mourn, but the stars kept arriving, one by one, and the audience applauded, and asked for autographs, and climbed over the gravestones to get a closer look. 'There's So-and-So! Look at how handsome he is!' they'd scream, and then everyone would go rushing over to see him, knocking the gravestones down and breaking them, and it was broiling hot, and the photographers were in your face. The security people finally squeezed me out of there, but Glória Perez and Raul Gazolla"—Daniella's husband—"had to take refuge in a little chapel. Apparently, Glória had just found out from the police that it was Guilherme who had murdered her daughter. It was a great tragedy. The day that Daniella was murdered and Collor was impeached was the day of the great Brazilian tragedy."



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Collor renuncia mas o Senado decide processá-lo por 73 a 8

Fernando Collor de Mello entrou ontem para a história do Brasil como o segundo presidente da República a renunciar ao mandato conquistado nas urnas. Em bilhete manuscrito, lido às 9h35 por seu advogado quando sua primeira testemunha de defesa começava a depor na sessão em que o Senado julgaria seu *impeachment*, Collor renunciou, solicitando a suspensão do julgamento e deixando surpresos os poucos aliados que lhe sobraram ao final de dois anos de governo e oito meses de denúncias e investigações sobre suas ligações com o tesoureiro de sua campanha eleitoral, Paulo César Farias, o PC.

O presidente do Supremo Tribunal Federal (STF), Sydney Sanches, reconvocou o Senado para nova sessão, a partir das 13h40 e, por 73 votos a 8, os senadores decidiram julgar Collor, sob protestos do advogado de defesa, José de Moura Rocha. O advogado de acusação, Evandro Lins e Silva, defendeu a tese de que a renúncia "é o reconhecimento de sua própria culpa" e não exclui a punição pelo comportamento do presidente.

No início da noite, o ex-presidente da República informou que irá recorrer ao STF contra a decisão do Senado e prometeu para hoje, às 11h, um "duro pronunciamento". "O presidente vai recorrer a todas as instâncias para preservar seus direitos políticos", disse o jornalista Etevaldo Dias, porta-voz de Collor.

Para o colunista político Carlos Castello Branco, "ao mandar sua carta de renúncia à Presidência da República, Fernando Collor desmistificou sua causa. Não se trata mais de alguém que se dispõe a correr todos os riscos para defender seus direitos e sua honra, mas de um político que luta pela continuação da sua carreira". Segundo Castello, a renúncia não é uma "estratégia ética", mas um "cálculo político". (Páginas 2 a 19, *Coluna do Castello*, página 2, e *Informe JB*)

Brasília - Gilberto Alves

Daniela foi morta com 18 perfurações no peito e no pescoço

Ator confessa que assassinou Daniela Perez

O ator Guilherme de Pádua, 23 anos, confessou ontem à tarde que assassinou a golpes de tesoura a atriz Daniela Perez, 22, sua colega gira consolar o marido de Daniela, o também ator Raul Gazolla.

Daniela foi encontrada morta na Barra da Tijuca por volta de 22h30

Brazilians were transfixed when an actress's onscreen lover confessed to her murder. Then President Collor himself became the subject of a farcical telenovela.

COURTESY OF JORNAL DO BRASIL

The murder took place on a Monday; it was reported, along with Collor's impeachment and resignation, that Tuesday. By Thursday, the nation's emotional reserves were virtually spent on the past days' sorrows and horrors: Collor had resigned, Guilherme had confessed, Daniella's funeral had turned into a mob scene. But there was more to come, for on that day it became known that the material author of the murder may not have been Guilherme at all but his pretty, pregnant teen-age wife.

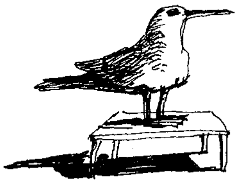
One may as well admit that a little *frisson* of delight crept into the national mood at this stage of the true-life drama. It was not just the inevitable guilty pleasure anyone might take at the profusion of gorgeous stars, ghoulish coincidences, and cliff-hanging to-be-continueds; it was the possibility of dreams come true. The statistics of misery in Brazil are well known: more than half the population is chronically hungry, seventy per cent has less than a sixth-grade education, and so forth. Less familiar is poverty's intersection with television viewing, which is a national passion. *Telenovelas* substitute for all the pleasures that most Brazilians cannot afford: the movies, the theatre, the circus, or, for that matter, the carnival parade or a soccer game, since the tickets are priced for tourists. The prevalence of poverty, the national genius for fantasy, and the genius of one man—Roberto Marinho, the creator of the Globo television network and of the huge *telenovela* industry—have combined to make the hours between six and nine-thirty in the evening the most meaningful in Brazilian national life. Unlike television stations in the rest of Latin America, which subsist largely on dubbed series from the United States, during prime time TV Globo offers exclusively Brazilian *telenovelas*—glossy, lavishly produced melodramas written by some of the country's most highly respected authors and featuring its best actors. In this tropical country, more homes have television sets than have refrigerators, and from the apartment building in Ipanema where I am staying I can look out in the evening and see the screens' colored lights twinkling in every window: they flicker in the bedrooms of the high-rise luxury towers to my left and right, and in the hillside favela directly in front of me they glow brightly in shacks where entire families often sleep in one room.

TV Globo officials like to point out that the program with the highest average audience share remains the half-hour evening news, but that program is not the one that gets discussed the following morning at the office. The news features characters like Collor de Mello or his replacement, the odorless, flavorless Itamar Franco, who seems incapable of more than pained expressions of dismay as the great ship of state sinks slowly into a mudbank. On the news, executives are kidnapped and murdered, state enterprises go bankrupt, drug lords wage war in the favelas, and sewer systems erupt in the streets, all of which is to say that in Brazilian terms nothing happens. In the *telenovelas*, executives are kidnapped and drug lords wage war in the favelas, but then the kidnapper is caught, the drug lord meets a nice girl and goes straight, the crooked executive's righteous son inherits the family business, and moral order is restored to the world. Things *change*. They change in precisely the same fashion in every single *novela*, which is as it should be, and during the daily three hours of first-run *telenovela* programming viewers can fantasize that the real Brazil is not the hopeless swamp of moral confusion and economic chaos that it sometimes feels like—not the place where citizens can freely and directly elect a President for the first time in twenty-nine years only to have him turn around and thumb his nose at them, for example—but a place where family values withstand all assaults, the poor eventually find jobs and always have enough to eat, and even the wicked can be redeemed. And, in that sense, the murder of Daniella Perez, the eerie resemblance between events on-screen and off, was thrilling, breathtaking evidence that reality could, even if only once, resemble the marvellous, lavish universe of the *telenovela*.

By general critical consent, "Corpo e Alma" was one of the more truly awful *telenovelas* ever presented, a compendium of the form's faults rather than its virtues. The saga of a woman with a heart transplant who falls in love with the lover of the heart's original owner, it played shamelessly to the audience's lust for soft porn and evildoing; it presented a universe in which decent souls are endlessly preyed upon by nasty manipulators, sexual perverts, kidnappers, and obsessively possessive lovers; it was violent; it was completely arbitrary in its plot outlines; it was, with few exceptions, plagued by mediocre acting. In the wake of the Perez murder, the Primate of Brazil, Dom Lucas Moreira Neves, wrote an unusually fierce editorial in the *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio's élite newspaper, accusing *novelas* like "Corpo e Alma" of fomenting violence through their exploitative story lines. "Who killed a young actress a few days ago?" the Primate wrote. "It would be ingenuous not to indict one of the co-authors, Brazilian television. The evening *telenovela* in general and—it pains me to say it—the *novela* 'De Corpo e Alma.'"

The *novela* continued for two months after Daniella's murder, and, once all the scenes she had taped were used up, the producers and the author continued to present her in flashbacks. Reviewing the final episodes of the *telenovela*, in March, a reporter for the country's principal newsweekly, *Veja*, wrote, "There are no limits to the bad taste and scurrilousness which surface in the cast stuffed with models who failed their school acting classes and in the vulgarity of the bouncing male buttocks of the strippers." Despite such reviews, "Corpo e Alma" was an enormous success with the public. In fact, with rare exceptions, most TV Globo *novelas* are enormous successes, capturing as much as ninety per cent of the IBOPE, the local equivalent of Nielsen ratings. This is due partly to Globo's virtual stranglehold on the television industry, and partly to the skill of its *novela* production line, which turns out melodramas that, exploitative and manipulative as they may be, look like nothing else produced on television anywhere in the world.

IT was in 1965 that Roberto Marinho—Doctor Roberto, as his employees tremulously address him—founded TV Globo. He was already known as the owner of Brazil's largest national daily, *O Globo*. Physically, Marinho, who, at the age of eighty-eight, remains fully in control of his empire and of his ability to inspire fear in the meek and the powerful, is a small-boned, wrinkled man who wears suits that look starched. Now that he has been elected to the Brazilian Academy of Letters—on the strength of a collection of his newspaper articles and the Academy's sincere hunger for patronage—he will also get to wear the fraternity's plumed hat and medal-studded cutaway.



Marinho rarely gives interviews, but in a recent moment of candor he did tell the journalist Mac Margolis, "Rightly or not, I always had a certain enthusiasm for the military governments." In a sense, his television network was a child of the 1964 military coup that turned Brazil into a military dictatorship for the next twenty-one years. Marinho shared the generals' belief in order and progress, and their faith in capitalism—capitalism in its most corporatist, heavily state-sponsored form. Under the protective shadow of a strongly interventionist regime, the station grew at a phenomenal rate. Today, eight years after the generals stepped down, there are five television networks in Brazil, and they are theoretically competitive, but Globo has an estimated seventy per cent of the advertising and, at prime time on a bad day, thirty per cent of the audience. It has ninety-four affiliates—thirty-two more than its closest competitor. The half-hour evening news program, sandwiched between the second and the third of the three prime-time *telenovelas*, steadily captures fifty per cent of the audience share; that is about forty million viewers, out of a total potential audience of eighty-three million. While the other stations have had to make do with imported Mexican *novelas* and with Geraldo Rivera, dubbed into Portuguese, Globo routinely hires whatever talent is around, if only to keep it idle and dry up the rival pools. The most significant rival network, TV Manchete, which is currently struggling with bankruptcy, produced three winning *telenovelas* over the years. One, "Pantanal"—a sort of eco-fantasy full of long shots of beautiful naked women bathing in unpolluted rivers—was one of the most successful of all time. But all the actors, directors, and authors involved are part of the Globo stable, which includes nearly six hundred salaried actors and thirty-one *novela* writers.

I met with the managing director of Globo's international division, Jorge Adib. A gruff sort of man, who talks in a gritty voice, smokes big cigars, and favors broad lapels and mesmerizing ties, Adib paid far less attention to me than to a soccer match on a giant screen behind me, but his answers were trenchant. When I asked him what made Brazilian *telenovelas* different from those in the rest of Latin America, he explained that the lachrymose Mexican *telenovelas*—the pioneers that set the standard for the form—are static and studio-bound, as if they were still reproducing the *radionovela* format that shaped the genre, back in the nineteen-thirties. "They give emotions with words," Adib said, focussing momentarily on me. "We do it differently—we create visual emotion. And so every time we have an emotion we spend money. We spend an average of a hundred and twenty thousand dollars per daily *novela* chapter. You think that's money? We charge fifty-three thousand dollars, fifty-four thousand, for every thirty-second commercial. We have an enormous market. We have practically the entire audience in Brazil, and that's equal to practically all the money in Brazil. And all the money in a country of a hundred and forty million people is a lot of money."

All of Globo's money and its considerable marketing skills cannot avoid the occasional dud. There is one screening every evening now, in the 7 P.M. slot, called "O Mapa da Mina" ("The Map of the Mine"), which concerns a young novice who has had the map to a secret treasure of diamonds tattooed on her buttocks. Despite this promising beginning, the *novela* sank immediately, and desperate rewrites and the emergency hiring of proved stars have failed to raise its ratings.

But that was a failure of execution, not of the art form itself. In fact, the most beautiful four hours of television ever produced in Brazil are probably the opening chapters of the 8:30 P.M. *novela* that replaced "Corpo e Alma." It is called "Renascer" ("Rebirth") and is the saga of a cocoa baron—or *coronel*, in Portuguese—who is first seen as a youth staking his claim to a section of the dense tropical forests along Brazil's northeast coast, where cocoa trees grow in the shade of magnificent tall ceibas. We are in the nineteen-forties, a time when a world cocoa boom made land claims a matter of life and death in the region. The youth is threatened with lynching by rival stakers and is saved by an itinerant Lebanese salesman. The young man kills his would-be murderers, wins a beautiful child bride from her lustful father, and makes the land prosper. In the fifth chapter, set in the present day, the youth reappears as a widowed patriarch, struggling to keep his *fazenda* and his family together as cocoa prices collapse. It is here that the real *novela* begins. The widowed *coronel* marries the young, sexy granddaughter of his mortal enemy. One of the *coronel's* four sons divides his affections between his father's bride and the daughter of another of his father's enemies. This girl, for her part, decides to rebel by reopening a whorehouse that both her father and the *coronel* used to frequent. Another of the patriarch's sons leaves his wife for a beautiful hermaphrodite.

"Renascer" is Luiz Fernando Carvalho's first big directing opportunity after ten years of assistant-director jobs at Globo, and he immodestly wants to do something revolutionary with the genre. "I want to present an image of Brazil that is not simply a postcard," he told me. "I want to get as close as possible to the soul of Brazil, and I want to redefine *o brasileiro* as a heroic being, someone who is always pushing the limits of things—is always between life and death, droughts and floods. I see him as mythical, full of grandeur." Carvalho is as tall and lanky as a basketball player, good-looking enough to be a *novela* star himself, and very intense. He has filled "Renascer" with the region's scrawny music, its feast-day dances, and its farming rituals. It seemed unnecessarily unkind to ask him how the character Buba—the model-thin hermaphrodite who falls in love with the cocoa baron's son and then tricks the patriarch into thinking she is bearing him a grandson (who may actually be incubating in the womb of a street urchin who may in the end turn out to be the Lebanese vender's long-lost daughter)—fits into the great heroic scheme of things. Carvalho thinks that, for all its flaws, television can have a more positive influence on Brazil than any other single force. "For better or worse, the Globo network is one of the extremely few things that work in this country," he said. "If we can make it engage in a dialogue with the viewer—with the tens of millions of viewers—we can help it provide hope, culture, self-confidence for the people, who need so badly to stop being ashamed of themselves, of their fate."

I later brought up the question of television's role in a culturally famished society with Antônio Fagundes, the protagonist of "Renascer." He is graying and a little paunchy, his face is pleasant rather than beautiful, and in "Renascer," as in all his other roles, he is surrounded by some of the most perfectly chiselled men in the country, but he radiates such warmth and relaxed sensuality, such keen Brazilian liveliness, that women consistently crown him their favorite in the fanzine polls. "TV Globo has become Brazilian society's scapegoat," he said, brushing aside any suggestion that the station is a corrupting force. "In this country, the *novela* scriptwriters are among the few prominent figures who do not present themselves as the saviors of the fatherland, and yet television dramas have become the only common point of discussion of our national reality. You can find critical points of view here that not even literature has. Television has been premonitory. When I played the villain in 'The Owner of the World,' Collor had just declared that all the savings accounts in the nation would be confiscated to help the economy. I said publicly then that the Brazilian people had been raped by power, that I had been raped by power, and people thought it was an exaggeration. But look at what happened!"

When I asked Fagundes what it felt like to be a star, he laughed and pointed out that he wasn't one. "A real star is forever, like Garbo or Monroe. Here, if you stop working you disappear from view. My vanity is reduced to the fact that if you turn on the television at prime time you're likely to see me there. A lot of people see what I do, and that puts a lot of responsibility on me. Real stars are free of responsibilities."

But if *telenovela* actors are not stars, I persisted, how could something like the murder of Daniella Perez have had such astonishing impact?

"This is a country that has a very hard time maintaining its memory," Fagundes said. "So far, it has proved incapable of telling its own history: it mixes up myths with things that really happened, and confuses the boundaries between events and fiction. When an accident like the murder of Daniella Perez happens, it is easy to get the categories mixed up."

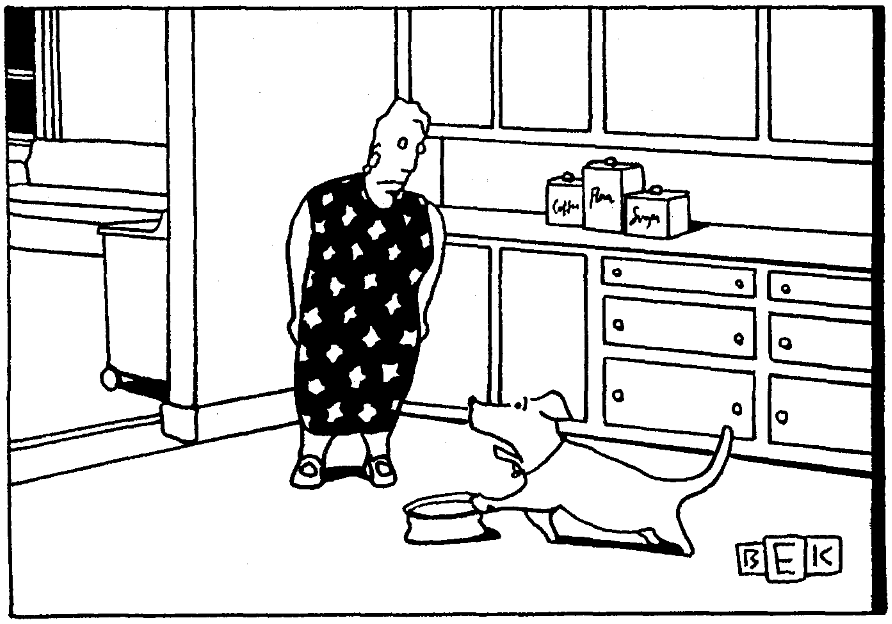
One gigantic question about the Daniella Perez affair remains unanswered: What, precisely, was the nature of the relationship between the victim and her murderer? Central to the myths spun on a weekly basis by the thriving fanzine industry is the promotion of offscreen romances—adulterous or not—between onscreen lovers. In the weeks preceding the crime, there hadn't been a wisp of such a rumor regarding Daniella and Guilherme de Pádua. According to the soap magazines, she was happily married to a handsome, pleasant actor, also a member of the regular TV Globo stable, whom she had in fact, in the best fanzine style, met three years earlier, while she was playing a bit part in a *telenovela* in which he was the leading man. A former member of an experimental modern-dance troupe, Daniella found her way easily into TV Globo, thanks to her *telenovela*-writing mother, but there can be no doubt that she justified Glória Perez's choice by engaging her audience's affections almost immediately. She was the perfect *telenovela* ingénue: sweet and sexy, with a baby's round eyes and plush lips. Now that it is impossible to find anyone to speak well of Guilherme de Pádua, it is easy to say that he was her diametrical opposite, the very embodiment of a *chato*—an overbearing and persistent bore. "He had no talent," his colleagues say, but the fact is that in the space of three years he made the transition from a bit-part actor from the provinces to a TV Globo featured actor.

Four nights a week, a couple of hundred people—dating couples, both gay and straight, groups of women, lonely-looking men—crowd into the front rows of the looming Galeria Alaska, a theatre on Copacabana Avenue, in a state of high expectation. The theatre smells, as a friend who went with me commented, like feet. When tinny music starts up and the curtain rises, a dozen muscular young men come out, one by one, in leopard masks and spotted bikinis, doing their best to prowl. The young men, locked into their muscles as they are, can barely move through a series of oddly staid, not quite full-frontal stripteases, and the only entertaining moments occur when Rogéria, a famous transvestite, comes onstage and sings, but the audience waits stoically for the payoff: just before the curtain falls, the young men appear again, and, in the equivalent of a tightrope act, walk from stage right to stage left and back, and then, all together, from upstage to down, nude and in a state of full (or, sometimes, perilously flagging) erection. These are the *garotos de programa*, striptease dancers whose duties often widen into prostitution, and whose profession was featured so prominently in "Corpo e Alma."

To state that Guilherme de Pádua, who is now twenty-three, found his way to the Alaska stage as a *garoto* when he first arrived in Rio from Minas Gerais a few years ago in pursuit of an acting career is simply to recount a fairly typical chapter in the biography of many young men trying to get a start in the entertainment world here. One of TV Globo's more desperate requirements is for young, fresh flesh, and one of the places where casting directors look for it is at the strip shows. Guilherme's leap from the Alaska theatre to stardom was not direct, however. He first got featured roles in a few undistinguished plays, and in two of the plays—one was called "Pasolini: Life and Death"—he played a murderer. There were also destitute times when he is reported to have lived as the guest of this or that theatre director or author. Last year, he got lucky: first, he landed a feature role in "Corpo e Alma," and then, despite his reputed lack of talent or charm, the chemistry between him and Daniella proved compelling. He evidently remained a *chato*, though, and cast members insisted loudly to the press that despite the onscreen chemistry there was no relationship between Daniella and Guilherme other than the normal cordiality expected on the set. How, then, did it happen that on the night of December 28th, after the day's session at the TV Globo studios was wrapped up, Daniella Perez agreed to follow in her black Escort as Guilherme, driving his father-in-law's Santana, led her from the studio to the highway that crosses through Rio's upper-class beachfront suburbs? And why did she agree to pull over, sometime after nine-thirty, onto a weedy patch of ground along one of the highway's dark side roads?

According to the prosecution, which has based its case on Guilherme's confession, and, more complicatedly, on the disputed subsequent confession of his wife, Paula Thomaz, Guilherme parked his car next to where Daniella's had pulled off the road, approached the Escort, began a violent discussion with Daniella, and strangled her until she was unconscious. Then he dragged her out of sight of any passersby, and attacked her with a pair of scissors while his wife egged him on. In the initial press stories, the pregnant Thomaz emerged like a figure in a nightmare from her hiding place in the back seat of Guilherme's car, screaming for revenge and wielding the murder weapon in an orgiastic attack of rage, but at this point she stands accused simply of providing "moral encouragement" to Guilherme.

Guilherme, Paula, and their prosecutors are all agreed that the motive for the murder was jealousy, but they disagree on whose. According to Guilherme, it was Daniella who besieged him, seeking a real-life relationship with him; tired of her incessant erotic pursuit, Guilherme accepted a meeting. During the confrontation, in the course of which Guilherme once again rejected her attentions, Daniella grew hysterical and violent. Her death was the unfortunate result. In this version, Paula was not present at the scene of the crime. She and her husband claim that Guilherme dropped her off early that afternoon at a nearby shopping mall, and that, despite her pregnancy, she spent the next six hours there, wandering from shop to shop without buying anything. Then Guilherme, the murder over with, picked her up and drove her home. But the prosecution claims that it was Paula who was jealous, and that Guilherme drove her to the spot on the side of the



"This isn't tap water, is it?"

road so that from her hiding place in the back seat she could hear for herself how Guilherme rejected Daniella.

For most actors, the kind of reckless passion that leads to murder normally happens only in *telenovelas*, but Guilherme and Paula clearly wanted to live lives worthy of the screen. Married only a few months, they were simultaneously obsessed with and paranoically suspicious of each other, and in an attempt to seal their love in a way that might be truly binding they had had each other's names tattooed on their persons: Paula on her bikini line and Guilherme (more committed? more imaginative? aware that his love had a shorter name?) on his penis. One can imagine the crises and recriminations that such attempts to bond might produce, and can even imagine that, as the prosecution claims, Paula completely failed to distinguish between the offscreen and the onscreen activities of her actor husband, and came to believe that the passionate kisses he exchanged with an actress in front of tens of millions of viewers translated into a betrayal of their own vows. Or was it the tattooed Guilherme, a small-time actor with big dreams and a certain demonstrated tendency toward exhibitionism and punishing ritual, who failed to distinguish between a grand, theatrical gesture involving a pair of scissors and the murder of another human being?

Paula Thomaz was not arrested until three days after the murder. Instead, police investigators, in what might be described as a kidnapping, held her, her mother, and a family friend for more than six hours, first in a police car and then in a municipal parking lot where garbage trucks are kept. There, according to the police, Paula confessed her participation in the crime, between sobs and disjointed mutterings about remodelling problems in her apartment. Despite this confession—which she has since consistently denied making—she was released. The next day, she was picked up at a clinic, where she was being treated for symptoms of a possible miscarriage, and taken to a police station for arraignment. By that time, Glória Perez had authorized TV Globo to broadcast the chapters featuring her daughter in "Corpo e Alma," and had agreed to continue writing chapters until the *novela's* scheduled end. Glória has since founded a movement of relatives of crime victims, and she is conducting her own tenacious investigation of her daughter's murder.

THE reason that Daniella Perez's mother was able to determine the fate of "Corpo e Alma" is that Brazilians think the soul and essence of a *telenovela* lies not with its much-loved stars, like Antônio Fagundes, or with skillful directors, like Luiz Fernando Carvalho, but with the author. Some of the authors are recognized members of the intelligentsia and belong, like Roberto Marinho, to the Academy of Letters. Others, like Benedito Ruy Barbosa, who wrote both "Pantanal" and "Renascer," have made their names primarily in the *novela* world. Almost without exception, they support the very issues and candidates that make Roberto Marinho blanch.

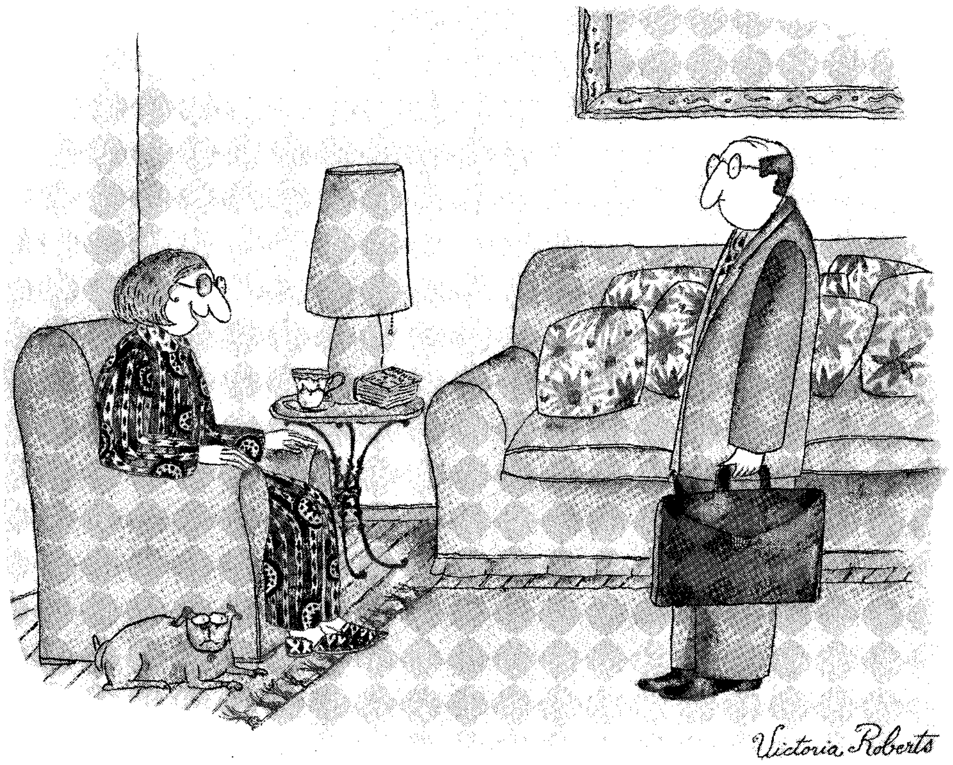
Virtually the entire stable of Globo actors and authors were known to be sympathetic to Luís Inácio da Silva (known as Lula), the radical-leftist candidate in the 1989 Presidential elections, and many campaigned for him. Lula might have won, had it not been for the decisive intervention of TV Globo, which systematically cast the leftist candidate in a bad light, most memorably during the second of two televised debates, which was held just before that election. By then, Lula looked dishevelled and frazzled, and TV Globo edited the material for its newscasts to make sure that he looked his worst. Three days later, Collor won handily. It is all the more ironic, then, that Gilberto Braga, one of the most radical and most highly respected Globo authors, should have written a miniseries (twenty chapters, as opposed to a *novela's* hundred and eighty plus) that by nearly all accounts played a direct role in the downfall of the Collor Presidency.

The other day, when I called at Gilberto Braga's apartment on Flamengo Beach, his manservant led me through elegantly decorated rooms and down a spiral staircase to the author's private study, a chrome-and-wood-panelled affair filled with books and first-rate paintings by contemporary Brazilian artists. Braga himself, when he appeared, was not wearing a cut-velvet dressing gown to match his surroundings but, rather, plaid Bermuda shorts and sandals, and he turned out to be tall, gangly, nervous, immensely polite, and rather shy. He has worked for TV Globo for the past twenty-one years, and he ascribes this durability to what he calls his "realism."

"I have never suffered from any limitations on my work," he explained, "but I am aware of the fact that when I sign a contract with TV Globo I am, in effect, as a person on the left, accepting limitations. Like many other artists and intellectuals, I am sensitive to the reality of my country, and I believe that the only solution for its suffering is socialism. Within the limitations of the system, I do what is possible to work for that change with my chosen vocation."

A few years ago, Braga went on, he began toying with the idea for a miniseries about the frenzied, fervent nineteen-sixties, centered on a hero bearing a composite resemblance to several youths who became guerrillas and coördinated the kidnapping of the United States Ambassador, in 1969.

Braga called the series "Os Anos Rebeldes" ("The Rebel Years"), and with it he transported an entire generation of teen-agers back to the euphoria of the sixties. From the very first chapter—which opens with a guerrilla bank robbery and flashes back to the dutiful, studious, idealistic teen-agers who try hard not to go all the way with their girlfriends and fail to understand why the son of a doorman should have different opportunities in life from the son of a factory owner—the audience was hooked. The series offered the exhilaration of living on a heroic scale, the thrill of danger and a worthy cause, and the drama of the increasingly rigid and joyless hero, who thinks only of revolution, and his long-suffering and terrified girlfriend, who wants to know why he can't think of her every once in a while. Braga believes that the main reason for its success was that the history of the early years of the dictatorship and of the struggle to overthrow it remains unknown even to most Brazilians who lived through that time, and certainly to the younger generation. As *novelas* tend to do, "The Rebel Years" made it possible for families to discuss a fraught and hidden subject openly at the dinner table, Braga says. That is certainly true, but there was more than that to the new series' astonishing impact on national life. In contrast to the standard *novela* plot—that of "Corpo e Alma," say—"Os Anos Rebeldes" dealt with characters who were not a group of tormented individuals pitted against one another in a contest for life and happiness but a com-



"I'm having a pajama day."

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munity of idealists who, even in the course of making the most dreadful mistakes, were motivated by a deep faith in the common goodness of mankind. It was this sense of shared purpose and solidarity that electrified Brazil's listless, aimless teen-agers. Whether they would have taken to the streets in hordes to demand the overthrow of Fernando Collor de Mello if "Os Anos Rebeldes" had not been showing at the time is debatable. When they did, in July of last year, Collor had been in power twenty-eight months. He had come to the Presidency through yet another of the nationwide waves of hope that Brazilians project onto their politicians. Once in power, he claimed to modernize the economy, wore a great many beautiful suits, failed to stop inflation, travelled widely and lavishly through Europe, and gradually become as deeply despised a politician as Brazil has ever produced. Now, as a fictional corrupt and power-mad politician, he is the thinly veiled protagonist of a miniseries called "The Maharaja," produced by Globo's only real rival in the *novela* field, TV Manchete. In it, the snakelike Collor character is played by an actor who had previously won fame with his Collor impersonations. This is the first time a President of Brazil has become the hero of a farce. (Collor has taken TV Manchete to court to block its release.)

BEFORE Collor turned into a miniseries, he was a national disgrace, and his removal from power last year was a national crusade. Before that, he was a hugely popular, good-looking, karate-black-belt Presidential icon who promised to bring Brazil into the twenty-first century, and before that he was a politician from Alagoas, a state in northeastern Brazil with the size, the economy, and the demographics of a Central American country—an area so poor that most of its families don't even own televisions; they listen to the radio, and are thus easily reached by the Collor family, which owns the principal newspaper (*A Gazeta de Alagoas*), a television station, and three radio stations. This mini-empire was founded by Fernando Collor's father, Arnon de Mello, who, as a loyal supporter of the military, was repeatedly elected to the Senate—even after he shot another senator dead in the course of a dispute over a matter of honor. The murder was officially ruled an accident (Arnon actually intended to shoot somebody else), and unofficially it was understood that death was just an instrument of politics in the northeast, where hired killers can still be easily had for fifty or so dollars a job.

By 1989, when the self-proclaimed modernizer of Brazil leaped into the Presidential race from this state, and this political tradition, he had been the military-appointed mayor of Maceió, the state capital, and the elected governor of Alagoas. And he had divorced his first wife and acquired a new wife and some remarkable in-laws. There were plenty of stories about his second wife, Rosane Malta Collor, and about the Malta clan, who ruled over the most backward part of backward Alagoas. Rosane, who is now twenty-eight, has a little brother, Joãozinho, who in 1988, at the age of fifteen, put a bullet through the neck of a political rival of his family. (As a minor and a first offender, he did not have to serve time.)

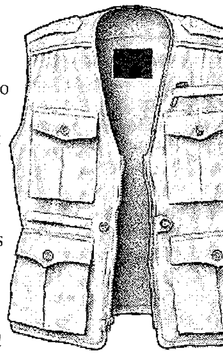
The members of the Collor family, who like to talk about their most recent trip to Paris and boast gently of their knowledge of French, were appalled by Fernando's choice of spouse, not so much because there was a murderer in her family—that was, after all, something they had in common—as because Rosane, blonde and toothy, with terrible posture and a slack-jawed backcountry smile, is the type of person who thinks that Switzerland and Europe are two geographically distinct places. ("We vacationed in Switzerland and then went back to Europe.") It was known in Maceió that the Collors detested her, and humiliated her at every opportunity, just as it was known that Fernando Collor had been the type of mayor who, according to legend, authorized a road-building project, paved both ends of the road, filmed them, and declared the project finished. It is not unusual for a Latin-American politician to bilk taxpayers out of a public-works project; what was original was the mediagenic use that Collor was supposed to have made of the fraud, and people liked to chuckle about it in Maceió.

But these were not the pictures or the stories that Brazil became familiar with during the Presidential campaign. Roberto Marinho and his TV Globo had been scouting the country for candidates long before the elections and had liked what they saw of Collor, who had run for governor promising to put an end to the rule of Alagoas's "maharajas," or corrupt bureaucrats. Collor was as sleek as a borzoi, articulate, sincere-looking, modernizing, and, above all, a highly palatable contrast to his rivals on the left. Fernando's younger brother, Pedro, was the head of the family's Globo-affiliated station in Alagoas, and the network used him as a liaison with Fernando. Even before the Presidential campaign got officially under way, Globo stationed a news team permanently in Maceió. It proved a brilliant decision. Fernando, barely forty at the time, had an instinctive grasp of television politics; the sound-bite, the made-for-the-camera crowd event, the magic of a snazzy logo were as familiar to him as if he had invented them, or as if he had grown up in the United States. Brazilians were charmed. In the words of the actor Antônio Fagundes, "Collor had all the attributes of power: he was good-looking, he wore beautiful clothes, he knew karate, he had a good car. He looked like a President." Soon the rest of the media picked up the Collor anti-maharaja stories, and by the time the 1989 campaign got into full swing Collor was nationally known.

The media could have easily examined the real record of the Governor of Alagoas; they could have looked into Collor's dealings with his campaign treasurer, a bald, roly-poly character named Paulo César Farias, who was known around Maceió mainly for his dubious business practices; they could have reported the fact that Governor Collor signed a law exempting the Alagoas sugarcane growers from taxes for ten years, thus eliminating up to sixty per cent of the state's tax base, according to some sources, and they could have wondered just what Collor might have obtained in exchange for such benevolence. But they didn't. Mario Sergio Conti, the managing editor of *Veja*, who seems to inhabit a permanent dense cloud of cigarette smoke and gloom, provoked largely by his country's misfortunes, readily acknowledges that the media had their least fine hour during the 1989 campaign. "We covered Collor according to the dazzling image that he projected, and we covered Lula, who is a former steelworker and union leader, according to the prejudices that society has about workers—that they are ignorant, that they are illiterate," he said when we had lunch recently in Rio. "But here's the thing: we didn't know how to do Presidential campaigns, because we had no experience with them. And it wasn't just that we failed to investigate Collor; we didn't investigate anyone." He gave a little snort of despairing mirth, and added, "Next time, we won't leave a single candidate standing."

The first year of the Collor government left Brazilians dizzy. Their President went skiing, scuba diving, car racing. Every Sunday, when he went jogging, he had a new slogan stamped on his T-shirt—an eco-slogan or a just-do-it exhortation. He announced privatizations of state-owned industries all over the map, and the minister of science and technology he appointed finally overturned Brazil's long-standing and much violated ban on foreign computer technology. He dismantled Brazil's nuclear program. He said friendly things about the Indians in the Amazon, and even doubled the territory allotted to them. He cut the number of ministries from twenty-three to twelve and fired about a fifth of the bureaucracy. It was all terribly modern, and wonderfully telegenic, and even my friends on the left, Lula backers all, talked about how maybe this great nation, with its gigantic gross domestic product (the ninth-largest in the world), was about to lumber, at last, out of its perpetual backwardness. Collor appointed Rosane to head the national charity institute, and his campaign treasurer, Paulo César Farias, to serve as liaison in unspecified ways between the government and powerful people with money, and those appointments seemed all right, even though Rosane was given to shopping sprees and fits of temper, and Paulo César Farias, known as P.C., who went in for gold chains and wore his shirt open to the chest hairs, seemed a little undignified.

Then there were signs of trouble. In August of 1991, Fernando Collor showed up at a press conference and made a point of displaying a hand that no longer wore a wedding ring. My Brazilian friends attributed the apparent separation to Fernando's reputed womanizing, or to Rosane's penchant for wearing color-coördinated shoes and handbags with her miniskirt tailleurs. In Brasília, there was even some muttering that it might be Rosane who was having an affair. The media speculated that the separation might be related to mounting evidence that the Maltas were using the charity institute—the Legião Brasileira de Assistência, or L.B.A.—as their own private kitty, but nothing came of this.



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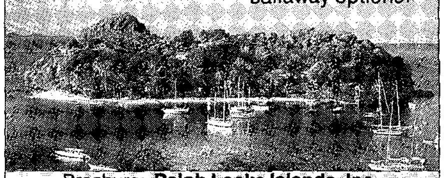

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Although Rosane renounced day-to-day management of the L.B.A., she retained the title of honorary president, and soon Fernando was wearing the wedding ring again. There were accusations that Paulo César Farias was on the take, extorting from the major Brazilian corporations sums so vast as to defy credibility. In November of 1990, Renan Calheiros, who, as the head of Fernando Collor's tiny party, the Partido de Reconstrução Nacional, was the leader of the Câmara dos Deputados, had resigned, alleging that corruption was sinking the government in "a sea of mud." Collor was losing popularity, and there was a general sense that once again Brazilians had put their faith in a savior who had no miracles to offer. Then, in May of last year, the President's kid brother, Pedro, gave an interview to *Veja*.

There are diverse explanations of why Pedro Collor decided to talk, and none of them would be out of place in a *telenovela* script. One is that Fernando, in his days as governor, had had an affair with Pedro's wife, Terezinha, who is the exceedingly pretty daughter of an Alagoas sugar baron, João Lyra. Pedro Collor has repeatedly gone to great lengths to deny this rumor, pointing out that whenever his brother wanted some private time with a woman of his acquaintance he would signal this to his secretaries at the governor's palace by turning off the light in his inner office. During the one three-hour visit his wife paid Fernando at the palace, he says, the Governor's secretaries assured him that the light was left on the entire time. Pedro says he decided to talk out of an elemental sense of decency, spurred on by the discovery that Fernando and P.C. were plotting to set up a rival media group to the Arnon de Mello empire, which Pedro had managed lovingly over the years.

In contrast to the moody, vain Fernando, Pedro, now forty, is talkative and modest. He has his brother's features, pulled slightly out of kilter, and a stare that can appear unfortunately wild-eyed. Twice in the preceding months, Pedro Collor had raised hackles in Brasília by telling *Veja* about P.C. Farias's involvement in corrupt deals, but, perhaps because of his slightly loopy manner, and perhaps because no businessman had come forward to denounce P.C. Farias for extortion, and because there was no proof, Pedro's accusations did not stir the media or rock the government. P.C. Farias held no official position in the Collor Administration, after all, and it was hard to believe that a garrulous small-time operator and failed businessman from Maceió could have significant influence on the Presidency. For good measure, Fernando Collor had proclaimed as soon as the first corruption rumors surfaced that he had last seen P.C. six months after taking power. Pedro, in his third, history-making *Veja* interview, not only restated his claim that P.C. was extorting in the name of the President but said that Fernando had been a frequent cocaine user, that P.C. was his front man, that an apartment in Paris that was nominally an office for P.C.'s business associates had in reality been bought for Fernando, that it was P.C. who paid for Rosane's extravagant shopping sprees, and that P.C. and Fernando had conspired to steal the Alagoas gubernatorial election from Renan Calheiros, the congressional leader who had resigned denouncing the mudslide of corruption, in order to hand it to a less independent candidate who happened to be related by marriage to the Malta clan.

"I was involved with drugs when I was very young, led on by Fernando," Pedro stated. "He was a constant cocaine user, and I learned from him, and from the people he introduced me to." And he continued, "Fernando is incapable of saying 'I need money for my campaign; help me.' He can be naked and not have shoes to wear and still he won't ask for help. P.C. takes the help he needs. If possible, he leaves you standing naked." Pedro then detailed P.C.'s modus operandi, recalling how a professional friend, Laíse de Freitas, had called him in some alarm to say he had been approached by a hit man for P.C. Farias. De Freitas had several government construction contracts, and part of the money for those jobs was being held up. P.C.'s man told him that the money would not be authorized by the state unless de Freitas paid a bribe. "Paulo César would say, 'Seventy per cent is for the boss, and thirty per cent is for me.' He would tell everyone that," Pedro declared. He made these charges on tape, and then, for good measure, the *Veja* team had him restate them on video.

Within days, on June 1st, the special investigative commission appointed by Congress to look into Paulo César Farias's dealings with the government called its first witness.

It was a few days before Gilberto Braga became aware of what was happening in the streets of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo and Curitiba and every other major city in the country. It was July, and "Os Anos Rebeldes," his miniseries about guerrillas and the anti-military struggle in the sixties, was about halfway through its run. The story's transitions were stitched together with international newsreel footage from the era: Beatles concerts and Martin Luther King's speeches, Twiggy and Vietnam, the début of the miniskirt and protest marches in Washington. Braga was spending most of his time in the Globo studios in Rio, doing last-minute editing on "Anos Rebeldes" and adding the music, which, in addition to the theme song, "Alegria, Alegria," by Caetano Veloso, an anthem of the period, included songs that Braga was contributing from his own considerable record collection. He was staying up nights and sleeping well into the afternoons, but one day his manservant shook him awake around the time of the midday news program. "There is a protest march on television!" he said. "Come see!" The protesters were a mass of bouncing teenagers, equipped with anti-Collor signs and slogans, and one of the signs said, "Anos Rebeldes: Último Capítulo." They were calling for the real-life Collor *novela* to end now.

By then, the congressional investigative commission on the doings of P.C. Farias was struggling not to drown in a torrent of information. First, a businessman—just one of many who were approached by P.C.—stepped forward to declare that Farias had attempted to extort money from him, and that he had refused to pay. Then, in late June, one of Collor's drivers produced a few fragments of what would soon become a paper trail involving forty thousand checks and more than a hundred pounds of documents. There was evidence that P.C. had stashed millions of dollars away for Fernando Collor in Europe; that he had had dealings with men whose names were linked by investigators to the drug trade in Colombia and Bolivia; and even that Collor had paid the mother of Lula's illegitimate daughter to come forward and denounce him.

The media, now hot on the scent, dug deeper, and the Federal Police weighed in with investigations of their own. It appeared that Rosane Malta's charity institute had bilked thousands of Brazil's poor out of emergency food supplies and blankets, that it had billed the government for "appropriate-technology factories" that turned out to be ice-cream and popcorn pushcarts, that it had speculated on truckloads of water brought in for drought-stricken areas and even on children's coffins.

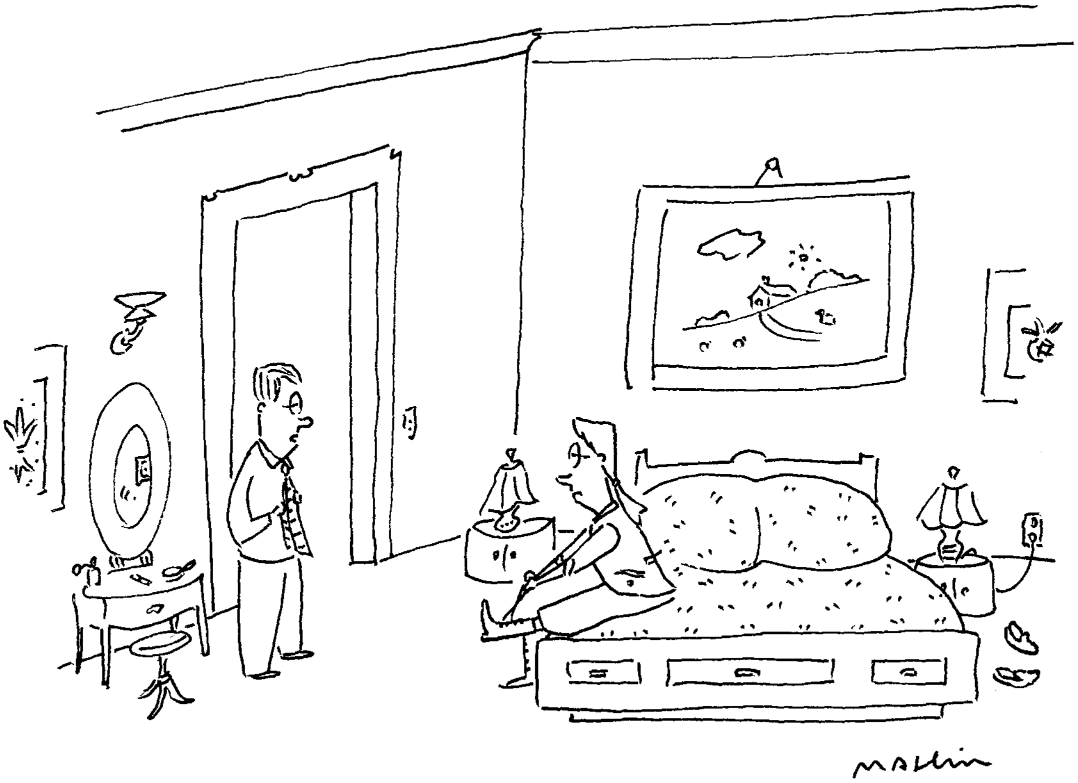
With each new, sickening revelation in the media about the looting of Brazil, the number of protesters in the streets multiplied. TV Globo was now busy denouncing the corruption scandal, and not just in its news programs: a new *telenovela*, called "God Help Us," began screening in the 7 P.M. slot. Behind the credits socialites and businessmen gaily splashed about in a pool of mud, which gradually engulfed them. Although the print media, in particular, dispute the notion that Gilberto Braga's television miniseries played a decisive role in the mass demonstration of outrage, the influence of "Anos Rebeldes" was obviously felt as long as the street marches lasted. "In Chapter Eight, we showed clips of Haight-Ashbury—hippies with flowers painted on their faces," Braga recalled. "At the very next demonstration, the *caras pintadas*—kids with their faces painted with colors and slogans—made their first appearance. Simultaneously, all over the country."

Perhaps the President was not watching television during those turbulent days. How else to explain the sudden dulling of his habitual extrasensory media perception? On a now famous day in August, he addressed a gathering of truck drivers, and, speaking for the benefit of the evening newscast, called for a march in his favor the following Sunday, August 16th. "Let's show that insane minority who is upsetting the country every day that enough is enough!" he shouted, and he asked his demonstrators to wear green and yellow, the colors of Brazil's flag. On that day, all across the nation, millions of marchers spontaneously thronged the streets, and they were dressed in black.

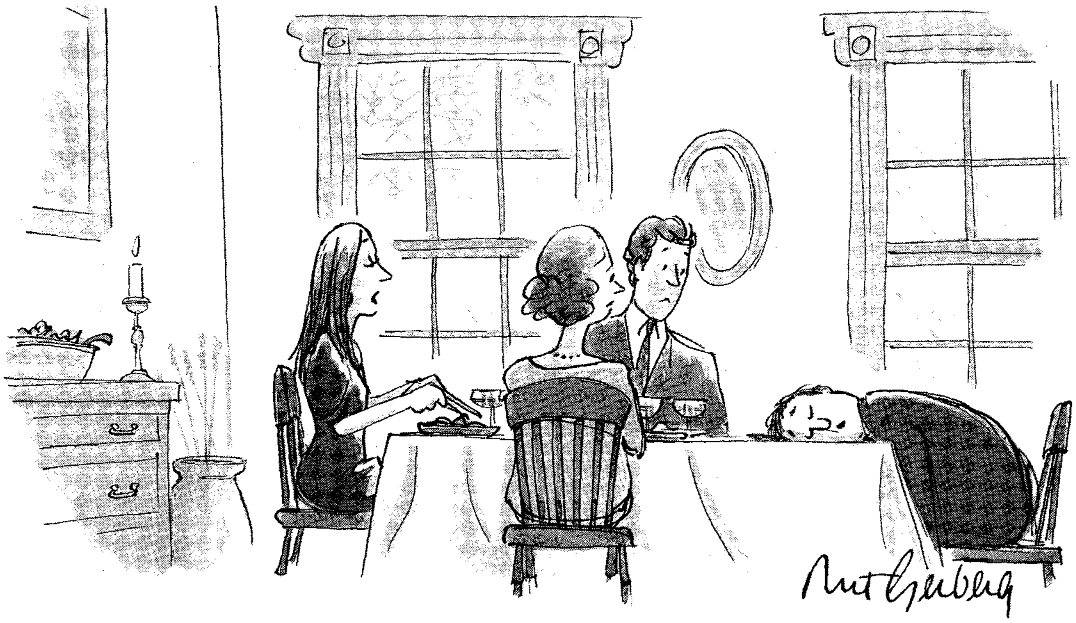
IN addition to television news clips and the yet-to-be-released "Maharaja," there is now a third entertainment about the unfolding of the Collor family melodrama, courtesy of Pedro Collor: he has summed up his experiences in a book called "Coming Clean: The Trajectory of a Charlatan." The book was launched this April, and immediately after publication I saw it in the hands of sunbathers in Rio and every other passenger on every commuter flight I took. The little brother offers us a stream of anecdotes and convincingly detailed examples of Presidential corruption, along with answers to questions that were on every Brazilian's mind and also to questions that had never occurred to anyone. Just what did Collor get in exchange for exempting the Alagoas sugar producers from taxes when he was governor? Donations of twelve million dollars that formed the basis of his Presidential-campaign war chest. Why did Fernando suddenly stop wearing a wedding ring in August of 1991? Because Rosane greeted him one day with the news that she was going to have a baby—news that, according to Pedro, enabled his brother to know that Rosane was cheating on him, because he had had a vasectomy after the birth of two children in his first marriage. Why did the wedding ring suddenly reappear? Because Rosane threatened to spill the goods on him if he left her. What goods? Among other details, the fact that Fernando preferred cocaine in suppository form.

Presumably in the interest of marital peace, Pedro spares only his father-in-law, João Lyra, who was once indicted on charges of ordering the killing of his wife's bodyguard when he discovered that the two were having an affair. (The case was adjourned for lack of evidence.) The rest of the Collor family is presented in compelling, and perhaps even reliable, detail. There are endless stories about Rosane's gaucheries and tantrums, rendered in a backcountry accent worthy of "The Beverly Hillbillies." There is a scene of Fernando Collor at an orgy, instructing the family driver, who interrupts it with the news of Arnon de Mello's death, to choose a woman for himself.

Pedro, who dedicates the book to his parents, among others, gives a straightforward account of his father's role in the death of the fellow-senator. He has a more difficult time writing about his mother, Leda Collor de Mello. A steely woman with a sharp eye for business



"Are we going out tonight as the happily married couple or as the couple whose marriage is going down the toilet?"



"Nowadays, Hal is ninety-nine per cent caffeine-free."

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and, according to Pedro, a fervent belief in discipline, Dona Leda was described to me by a friend who is part of Alagoas high society as "very interesting—so interesting that I am entirely willing to believe that Arnon didn't marry her for the money." Arnon de Mello founded his media business with his brains and her money. Although she owns seventy-five per cent of the shares in the Organização Arnon de Mello, she left its management in the hands first of Pedro's oldest brother, Leopoldo, and then of Fernando, who ran it for seven years and, according to Pedro, brought it to the edge of bankruptcy. When Fernando turned to politics, Pedro took over the business. Soon, he says proudly, the company was making enough to keep his mother on a ten-thousand-dollar monthly stipend. "As a result," he writes, "I conquered, even more than respect, a special place in the austere heart of Dona Leda." There is heartbreak in what follows. After Pedro gave his first interviews in *Veja*, denouncing P.C. Farias, and before the publication of the historic interview in which he attacked his brother, Dona Leda threatened to denounce him publicly as insane. Horrified that his revelations would detract from Fernando's moment of glory at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, she wrote a letter to Pedro demanding that he leave the country as soon as possible. She signed it "Your long-suffering mother," and summarily removed him from command of the family business. In his book Pedro includes an excerpt of what he said was a taped conversation between his mother and an unnamed friend. "It's sad," Dona Leda muses on the tape. "I have one son, the President of the Republic, who is a thief . . . and another who is an excellent businessman but decided to transform himself into a stool pigeon."

Pedro writes, "After being betrayed by one's mother, one has few emotions left in one's soul." But there was more to come. On the morning of September 17th, after reading in the paper the latest round of accusations by Pedro against his brother, Dona Leda suffered three consecutive cardiac arrests. She remains in a coma to this day.

ONE of the essential characteristics of the *telenovela* format is its infinite expandability, and in this respect, as in so many others, the saga of Brazil's impeached President fits the genre. First came the sex-drugs-and-corruption melodrama of his public ascent, then the national epic of his removal from power, and now Brazil is witnessing "Fernando III: The Chase." In this installment, his henchman, P.C. Farias, is a fugitive, having gone on the lam on June 30th, the day a judge issued an arrest warrant for him on charges of tax evasion. The Federal Police, who performed admirably during the impeachment hearings, have now conveniently turned themselves into the Keystone Cops, and have spent the last few weeks bumbling about the country, showing up in Brasília, São Paulo, and Alagoas to detain the country's best-known scoundrel hours or days, or even months, after he vacated the premises. Since Collor's real-life *novela* keeps adding chapters, we may yet get "Fernando: The Comeback," but these days Collor rarely abandons his beautiful home in Brasília, with the lavish gardens that P.C. Farias had remodelled for him to the tune of nearly five million dollars. The sluggish justice system is proceeding with its trial of Collor, and, presumably, one day he will be judged. But to believe that he will ever live with sixteen other prisoners in a suffocating cell that has musty mattresses lined up on the floor and a noxious latrine in one corner, like any other Brazilian criminal, is to believe in fantasy. For that matter, to think that even one of the captains of industry who connived with the President's gangsters and acquiesced in their own shakedowns should be punished is to invite public ridicule.

MEANWHILE, Collor's competition in the real-life-*novela* ratings, Guilherme de Pádua, *is* wasting away in jail, in a reeking, overcrowded prison cell, from which he and his fellow-prisoners were discovered plotting an escape last month. His wife—whose confession, if it indeed was such, was obtained illegally—also remains in jail, waiting for a trial that may be scheduled in a year or two. In May, she gave birth two months prematurely; the birth was no doubt hastened by a beating she received at the hands of her fellow-inmates. A few months before the baby's birth, when Guilherme and Paula were called into the same courtroom, they were photographed making eyes at each other and kissing behind a prison guard's back. In a brief prison interview just before his son was born, Guilherme, bearded and Christlike, allowed himself to be filmed putting on first a saintly expression and then a sorrowful expression, and saying things like "I only believe in eternal love." These vows notwithstanding, there are increasing signs that the couple are not on friendly terms; there are reports that Paula's family has taken to burning his letters to her.

Daniella's mother, Glória Perez, has managed to locate a man who on the night of her daughter's murder was working as a gas-station attendant near the scene of the crime. On August 3rd, he declared that he had washed the blood-caked interior of a car driven by a man he identified as Guilherme de Pádua; the man was accompanied by a young woman wearing dark glasses, but he could not positively identify her as Paula Thomaz. His deposition lends credence to Glória Perez's theory that Daniella was not murdered on the roadside, in a spontaneous act of violence, but inside the car, and possibly at some distant location, by Guilherme and Paula acting in concert.

There are also increasingly open indications from Guilherme's lawyer, Paulo Ramalho, that Guilherme will soon decide to accuse Paula of participation in the murder, and broad hints concerning the motive. "Legal experience demonstrates that scissors are typical of women's crimes," the lawyer declared in an interview to a scandal sheet called *O Dia* on July 21st. "It's typical of someone who is very jealous." Encouraged by an exhortation of Ramalho's to "let public opinion discover" if it was Paula who killed Daniella, one could speculate that Daniella and Guilherme were having an affair and were spied on by Paula, who crawled out of her hiding place in the car to confront and attack the couple. This is not Glória Perez's version, but at least it is a version that makes satisfying melodramatic sense, and allows Brazilians to explain to themselves a real-life *telenovela* that has kept them in suspense for months.

A few weeks ago, I had a long conversation with Maria Tereza Souza Monteiro, who conducts the surveys that allow TV Globo to monitor audience response to a *telenovela* and steer it to success. I asked her why the public had been so fascinated by a starlet's murder and suddenly so indifferent to its President's impeachment, and she answered that there was no indifference involved: "They followed the impeachment proceedings, but the technical ins and outs of the actual legal process were extremely difficult to understand," she said. "It was much easier to understand Daniella's death, and less frightening. People believed that it was their protests that led directly to Collor's departure, and that was scary: they thought, Oh my God, I can overthrow a President!" Guided by the media, millions of Brazilians have now figured out Fernando Collor in a way that is easy to understand, and is not frightening: He is not the corrupt scion of a corrupt political tradition, a crook who connived with other crooks in government and the private sector to do business in a way that it is traditionally done. He is not part of an unworkable society in which seventy million people vote but only seven million earn enough to pay income tax, nor is he the product of a political culture that was weaned on TV Globo and United States marketing techniques. He is the villain of a *telenovela*. Like Guilherme de Pádua, he is merely a Bad Man, and this means that, now that he has walked off the set, there is still hope. ◆

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A REPORTER AT LARGE

TRUCKING THROUGH THE AIDS BELT

Along the remote routes of eastern Africa, long-distance truck drivers have been affectionately revered as cowboys in convoy. But now they are also identified as the unwitting carriers of AIDS*, particularly in Rwanda, at the heart of the* AIDS *Belt, where their H.I.V. infection rate is fifty-one per cent.*

BY TED CONOVER

THE red dirt road is so slick with rain that the trucks stacked along either side look as if they might simply have slid off. Pools of muddy water fill the center. All thirty or forty trucks are pointed one way: toward the border crossing a few hundred yards down the road—toward Tanzania. Most have come to this place—a Kenyan settlement called Isebania—from Mombasa, where there is a port, or from Nairobi, where there is an oil depot. The weekend has stopped their progress: the customs offices are closed. There is no traffic except for the back and forth of turnboys attending to a group of four semi rigs with royal-blue tractors hooked up to long white shipping containers. The trucks have punctures, as they say in East Africa, and the turnboys must repair them. And when that's done there are mechanical problems, which the turnboys must attend to as well.

The four drivers of this small convoy sip tea under the narrow wooden awning of one of the many one-room restaurants that line the road, and watch the muddy proceedings. One of the perquisites of being a driver is that the driver gets to stay clean. Each driver's turnboy is responsible for their particular truck: he maintains it mechanically, guards it at night, warms it up in the morning (in colonial days, he turned the crank that started the motor, hence "turnboy"), and even does the cooking if there's no restaurant around. The turnboys with their trucks are like Masai with their cattle, constantly attentive. When the trucks are in a group like this, the turnboys help each other out.

On my left, Malek, the driver of the truck called Fleet 10, yells to his turnboy, Stephen, to be sure to check the tubes for more than one puncture each. (The names of some of the men have been changed.) Malek then explains to me that these flats could have been avoided if the armed escort, travelling with his truck from Nairobi, had allowed them all to rest. Escorts, provided by the national traffic police, are required for any truck hauling valuable imported goods—electronics, for example, or tires, as in the case of Fleet 10. This is because of the likelihood of theft or ambush, even in a country with the relative stability of Kenya. The convoys of escorted trucks—up to thirty or forty of them—tend to travel at night, when traffic is light, typically setting off around 2 or 3 A.M. But the traffic police, in a hurry to arrive, sometimes push the drivers too hard. A driver like Francis, whose jumbo rig, Fleet 37, is seventy-two feet long, with a payload of three containers weighing a hundred tons, needs to go quite slowly or else make frequent stops to let his brakes and tires cool off in hilly central Kenya. But on this trip the policemen had insisted that he keep going. The result was several burst tires.

I did not arrive with the three trucks in the escorted convoy but instead joined them in a fourth truck, Fleet 19, which was carrying empty beer bottles. Such a load, Malek explains, does not qualify as protected cargo. It is unlike auto parts, imported liquor, or "clothes from your dead people."

"What?" I ask.

"Yes, you know, the clothes—the clothes they sell at markets," he says.

"But what dead people?"

"You know, the clothes they sell that have been worn by your people who now are dead—*nguo za mitumba*."

It suddenly dawns on me. "Secondhand clothes."

"Yes!"

I see that Malek, though he is a worldly man, who has travelled on three continents, does not understand the discarding of clothes that can still be worn. In other words, he does not understand the Western practice of fashion. I don't have the heart to explain it.

"Those clothes are very valuable, then?"

"Oh, yes," Malek says. He takes the sleeve of his colorful print shirt between thumb and forefinger and holds it out toward me. Green stripes in the shirt match the color of his eyes; Malek has Arab blood. "Nice, isn't it?" (I speak with the men in English, since their English is much better than my Kiswahili, the language they prefer.)

The proprietress of the restaurant comes out to refill our cups with a pot of delicious *chai ya maziwa*, tea with milk. Refills aren't free, but everybody wants one. She then sets down the metal pot and leans against the doorjamb, and joins us in passing the time by watching the turnboys get filthy. A spider drops from a fold of her skirt and dangles above the concrete floor.

A WEEK earlier, I had been shown around a truck stop outside Nairobi—the Athi River Weighbridge Station—by a medical doctor named Job Bwayo. In the early nineteen-eighties, when Bwayo, who also has a Ph.D. in immunology, was at the University of Nairobi researching sexually transmitted diseases among prostitutes, his subjects started showing up with the symptoms of a new disease. After AIDS had been identified, Bwayo said, "I got interested in looking at the other side of the question—there must be a vector, somebody to be spreading it. There must be a man involved. Who are these men and what do they do? And it was thought that the truck drivers who cross the continent must have some role. So we went out to see."

Truck drivers were early suspects because they not only travelled constantly but had a reputation for sleeping with the "commercial sex workers," as researchers call them, who are a feature of wayside bars and restaurants all over sub-Saharan

Africa. In 1989, Bwayo, who has received grants from the University of Washington and the University of Manitoba, opened a free clinic at Athi River for the use of drivers and others in the area—mainly women from surrounding shanties.

Blood tests on his patients found that twenty-seven per cent of the drivers were H.I.V.-positive; a later study showed that drivers coming from closer to central Africa had higher rates of seropositivity. Rwanda, for example, had a rate of fifty-one per cent; Uganda, thirty-six per cent; and Kenya, nineteen per cent. In similar studies of commercial sex workers, infection rates were found to run from thirty-four to eighty-eight per cent. Because AIDS is thought to have originated somewhere around the west side of Lake Victoria, in Zaire, Rwanda, or western Uganda (one theory is that it jumped to human beings from green monkeys, which carry a similar virus and are slaughtered for food in the area), and because long-distance trucking is this region's main link to the outside, it was hypothesized that truckers were unwittingly transporting the virus from central Africa to the rest of the world. Today, of the fourteen million people with H.I.V. worldwide, more than eight million of them are in sub-Saharan Africa.

GARY PANTER

International aid money began to be channelled through organizations like the African Medical and Research Foundation to educate the truckers and the women they sleep with. Getting the word out was not without its problems, however. Bwayo and the drivers ruefully remember headlines such as one on the front page of a Nairobi daily announcing to a frightened nation that "TRUCK DRIVERS SPREAD AIDS!" This reputation became a public-relations problem for the drivers, many of whom had enjoyed for years an aura not unlike that of the American cowboy: a man of carefree mobility who traverses unknown landscapes and survives by his wits—and, in the African case, is relatively well paid besides. But in the late nineteen-eighties the drivers started to become unhappy celebrities in the annals of AIDS research. "Oh, yes, the truckers!" said Dr. O. E. Omolo, the provincial medical officer in Mombasa, when I expressed a desire to travel with some of them in order to learn about their lives. "They are true museums of disease! Chancroid, gonorrhea, syphilis, herpes, AIDS—well, the list goes on and on!"

BEFORE the concern with AIDS, I had known of African truck drivers through brief mentions in the books of a dozen travellers who had beaten their way across Zaire, or the Sahara, or war-torn Mozambique, by hitching rides with them. Especially in the poorest or most politically unsettled countries, trucks are the only means of getting in or out, public transportation being virtually nonexistent. As travellers, it struck me, the drivers probably had no equal in Africa.

Truckers almost never drive completely across the continent, from north to south or from east to west, since the condition of roads and the politics of Africa's fifty-three countries make it easier to ship by sea. Instead, most African trucking links the middle and the margins, plying routes from the coasts to the interior and back again. The principal ports of East Africa are Mombasa and Dar es Salaam, both on the Indian Ocean south of Somalia. From there, goods travel inland to Malawi, Zambia, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, western Zaire, to southern Ethiopia, Somalia, and, in calmer times, to southern Sudan. The so-called Trans-African Highway is merely a network of paved roads that link Mombasa to Nairobi, to Kampala, and then to Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, or to Kinshasa, in Zaire.

Some of the biggest competitors in this business are owned by international freight-forwarding conglomerates and are European-managed. Interfreight, a German trucking firm in Dar es Salaam, and Transami, a Belgian-run concern in Mombasa, are often favored by drivers, who say they're better paying and better run. Better paying, in the case of Transami, which owns the trucks I'm with, means compensation that ranges from twenty-six hundred to three thousand American dollars a year for a driver, and, for a turnboy, between five hundred and seven hundred dollars. In a country like Kenya, whose annual per-capita income is three hundred and sixty dollars, this is good money. But to Transami managers, dealing with the huge capital costs of imported trucks, fuel, and parts—a set of new tires costs nearly fifteen thousand dollars, for example—drivers' salaries are peanuts.

Salary, however, does not necessarily constitute all of a driver's income. Wherever there are customs rules and import duties, there is money to be made getting around them. Extra fuel taken on in Tanzania, for example, can net up to a month's salary if resold on the black market in a landlocked country. Gray parrots procured in the jungles of Zaire fetch a high price back on the coast, if they make it alive. Tanzanian maize meal increases in value over fifty per cent once it's smuggled into Kenya.

The four Transami trucks in Isebania will travel in a loose convoy at least as far as Rwanda. Besides Malek and Francis, who has a potbelly, wears colorful silk-screened T-shirts, and loves to listen to the news on his small short-wave radio, the drivers are Sammy, a beanpole-thin member of the Kalenjin tribe, famed for its distance runners, who sports long beatnik sideburns and begins every day with a couple of wind sprints, and Bradford, the driver of Fleet 19.

A fifty-year-old veteran of the Kenyan Army, Bradford is a soft-spoken man who is meticulous in his grooming: every day, he shaves, puts on a clean button-down shirt, and polishes his black metal-toed oxfords. Unlike Malek and many other drivers, Bradford drives cautiously, which is all right with me. It is not all right with Obadiah, the turnboy. Occasionally, as we rumble out of a turn and onto a straightaway, Obadiah will shift restlessly in his seat, then wave his long arms in the air, and finally say, "O.K., now you can go faster. Faster! *Haraka-haraka!*" As the driver, however, Bradford rules. He tells me he has not had an accident in twenty years. He responds to Obadiah's exasperation the same way he responds to practically any perturbation: silently, almost stonily.

Obadiah is the opposite. His liveliness, humor, and occasional swings of mood can all be seen in his animated face and in the way he moves. A man of thirty-four with a rangy build, he is better educated than his driver, having completed the Kenyan equivalent of high school. One of the things, besides my cigarettes, that pleased him most when I joined Fleet 19 was my copies of Chinua Achebe's "Things Fall Apart" and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's "Petals of Blood": he quickly borrowed and consumed both.

Fleet 19 is a white-and-blue British Leyland Landtrain. The number "19" is roughly hand-painted in white on the big black front bumper. Inside the cab are hand-painted the following notices: on the dashboard, "No Smoking" and "Wear Seat Belt"; across the glove compartment, "Speed Limit 60 Kph"; and, behind the driver's head—the only one that Bradford and Obadiah pay any attention to—"Engine Must Be Allowed to Run 5 Min Before Shutdown—200 Sh. Fine." There is no radio, CB or other. The steering wheel and a single seat are on the right; on the left is a double seat for passengers. In between is the gearshift. The horn works from a button on the dash. The speedometer does not work. Though the passenger-side rear-view mirror was smashed long ago, enough shards remain to deliver a serviceable rear view. The door it's attached to doesn't open from the outside and can be opened only with difficulty from the inside. The vent-window locks are broken, but that's fine, because Obadiah and I can reach in through them and unlock the truck if Bradford is not around with the key. Stuffed underneath and behind the seats are all the clothes that Bradford and Obadiah have brought on this trip, and in the narrow slot between the seats is jammed my small duffel.

The truck is longer than an American eighteen-wheeler: the tractor has ten wheels, and the forty-foot trailer twelve more. On our trailer is a forty-foot container, which holds, along with a small amount of sheet metal, a great quantity of new Belgian beer bottles bound for a brewery in Rwanda. They make a good

VIGIL

Nights, I stood in the bedroom window,
a target for eyes,
camouflaged by trees.

The aboveground pool, swing set,
clothesline—our daylight
yard—became extinct.

Then it was yours, your private
woods, where you'd sit,
far from the house,

under close-knit branches,
drinking beer, and burning holes
in the dark with cigarettes.

I saw each eye
grow red, redder
as you inhaled.

Sometimes I'd approach,
offer you another beer,
wait for "Yes" or "No,"

my father's voice,
to come from the smoke.
You disappeared

in fur-lined dark,
a possum, with night
eyes keeping watch.

I hoped you'd see me,
daughter, co-conspirator—
I knew you were a stranger,

that you preferred to live
outside, in a ragged nest
of leaves.

Was it cunning or dumb
luck that made you succeed,
disappear for good?

In one shot
you ruptured the heart
of the animal you'd become

during those long nights
of rehearsals, playing
dead, shut in the back yard,

your coffin.
No trick can make you
reappear, walk back

up the cellar stairs,
paper in hand, ready
for coffee, a cigarette,

grateful for my mother's
morning face, scarred
with sleep, waiting

on the other side
of the kitchen table,
where you'd sit

shaking yourself
from this bad dream.
Maybe it was fear—

I know the smell,
acrid, sweaty.
Today a fox has left it,

with his wild signature
tracked outside,
in snow, behind the house.

—MARIANNE BURKE

strong beer in Rwanda, but they do not make bottles; thus, this critical import from Rwanda's former colonial master.

Though there is much to do before the reopening of the customs offices, on Monday morning, the work doesn't weigh too heavily on anyone's mind, because Kenya is the easy part of the journey. In Kenya, the roads are paved and repair facilities are close at hand, so you can traverse the country in three or four days. Communication with others, in Kiswahili or in English, is seldom difficult. Good food is available, and friends are never too far away. Travelling in convoys is nice but not essential. In Kenya, the road is known.

But at Tanzania the pavement ends, the shilling notes change from blue to red, the prices plummet. The danger quotient rises. It is like driving from Texas into Mexico. The four Transami trucks will try to travel close together. And, this being Africa, there is one major added effect: in Tanzania, the drivers and the turnboys, from multiple rival tribes and subtribes, all become Kenyans.

OBADIAH, his elbow out the window, looked as hip and natural in my sunglasses as Bradford did awkward. I was sharing the glasses because the sky had cleared as we rolled away from the border, and neither had any. "Such fine goggles!" Obadiah exclaimed. "Very yellow! So nice!"

Our plunge down a hill into Tanzania was insanely bouncy. The smooth roads of Kenya had yielded to something worse than dirt: a paved road in advanced decay, its remaining islands of asphalt rising randomly to form a thousand speed bumps. For much of the afternoon, our progress varied from five to fifteen miles per hour, Bradford perspiring as he wrestled the wheel left and right, bouncing off his seat when the old pavement lifted the truck, and Obadiah wincing to think of the tires he'd have to repair. "The road is very unfair, very harsh," he said, shaking his head.

At the first town, we pulled over to await Malek, who had stayed back to avoid our dust. Next to a shop where we bought soft drinks stood the town's unusual wooden welcome sign: at the top, in Kiswahili, was a pleasant "Welcome to Tarime!" and then came a skull and crossbones and the legend "Danger—Protect Yourself. There Is AIDS Here!"

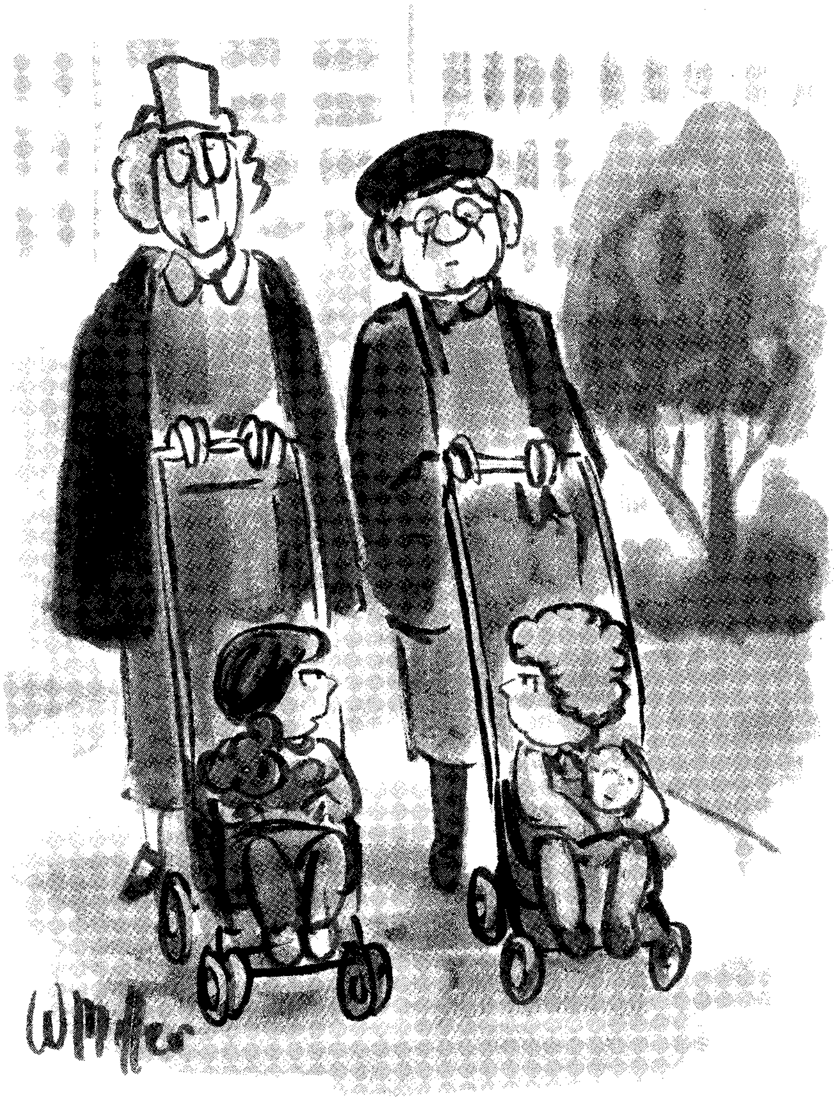
Tarime, Obadiah said when we were back on the road, had Tanzania's second-largest AIDS problem. Another afflicted locale was Mwanza, a city at the south end of Lake Victoria, which we hoped to reach by the next night. The corner of Tanzania that we were entering was one of the places worst hit by AIDS in the world.

I tried to gauge Obadiah's reaction as we talked about this situation. Four drivers he knew had probably died of the disease, he said. But it was hard to be sure. Even if there were a way for drivers to be tested, he explained, most drivers would probably not want to be: "It would only make them sad to know." But this talk did not seem to sadden Obadiah. Instead, after a while he became philosophical. "People must die," he told me. "If they did not, the world would be overcrowding. You could not drive. You see, when people die, other people get their jobs. If nobody died, there would be too many drivers." Obadiah, a smart man who was the son of a truck driver, was probably well qualified to drive. But in the deteriorating economy of Kenya he was not likely to be promoted any time soon. Some turnboys were now in their forties. Then, again, if Bradford were to die . . .

I mentioned that friends of mine in the United States had died of AIDS, and said that it was not a nice way to go.

"No, it is not," Obadiah agreed. "But there are many other ways to die." I believe he meant that people in East Africa died of malaria, dysentery, and truck wrecks, and, of course, he was right. But to downplay the AIDS threat, and even to mention its positive side, was not the reaction I had expected.

Bradford, fifty years old in a region



"My parents are the same way. Lots of ostentatious child-rearing, very little direct nurturing."

where the life expectancy was fifty-seven, listened to everything but said nothing.

TOGETHER, our truck and Malek's dwarfed the five or six buildings in a village called Utegi. Sammy and Francis were somewhere behind, but Bradford said not to worry—they would catch up in a day or so. I was surprised when we pulled over at dusk, having expected us to travel through the night, with Obadiah to share the driving. But Obadiah and Bradford shook their heads. "Many bad men in Tanzania," Bradford said, making a gun of his thumb and index finger. "You break down at night, they shoot you."

But they had stopped at night in Kenya, too; bad men were only part of the story. The rest, I thought, was simply that the trucking culture they were a part of considered sleeping at night the civilized thing to do. In Utegi, Bradford and Malek paid local boys a hundred shillings (twenty-five cents) each to guard the trucks overnight, and then they and I took tiny rooms in the village's only hostel, while the turnboys laid sleeping pads across their trucks' front seats.

We left in the morning for Mwanza, and Bradford said we would make it that evening if all went well. The dirt road, though seemingly empty, was full of wonders. Winding its way through tall brown brush on our left was a procession of people led by an old man with a big spear. "They are Luo, going to a funeral," said Obadiah, who was himself a Luo. The spear was "to chase away death," he explained as we passed. A few kilometres further on, where the roadway doubled as the eastern border of Serengeti National Park, we came upon baboons seated by the roadside, and soon afterward we were passed by several of the open-backed safari vehicles called "overlanders," all of them filled with white people.

"*Wazungu!*" Obadiah cried out the window, and turned to me, grinning. This was a joke, because I was already known less by my name than by the term *mzungu*, the singular of *wazungu*, which is basically Kiswahili for "gringo," with about the same hint of deprecation.

It was September, and the land, a month or two from rainy season, looked too sere to support any human life. But Africa was deceptive. Life lurked around every bend. In the seeming middle of nowhere, we saw propped up at the side of the road tall sisal bags full of charcoal. Though we had brought one bag from Kenya, to cook with, Bradford decided it would be a good idea to pick up another—prices would never be lower. We pulled over and waited. It took about five minutes for a teen-age boy to emerge from the landscape of dry grass and leafless trees to discuss the price. An hour or two later, we stopped for woven bamboo mats, a sample of which hung from the only tree for miles. Bradford explained that these were good for sitting on and for sleeping on. Carved wooden stools, the truck drivers' lawn chairs, were next. Obadiah secured all the stuff to the front of the trailer.

MWANZA was not the lakeside oasis I had hoped for. A small port, it appeared to be built on a huge foundation of pink dust. We kicked up clouds of it wending through town to the filling station on its far side, over principal roads, all of them dirt. The heat was oppressive, so we rolled the windows down, and our damp bodies immediately became coated, like every two-story building in town, with a layer of pink powder, which left me looking darker and Bradford and Obadiah looking lighter.

Our destination was a lone Esso station, where we would refuel with a thousand-odd litres of diesel. Much of this was to be stored in the two main tanks of the tractor, and the rest would go into tanks fitted under the sides of the trailer. But when we arrived at the station—a single working pump at the edge of a big dirt parking lot—we discovered that trucks had been lining up there for three or four days. The station was out of fuel. Bradford, maneuvering with Obadiah's help, added Fleet 19 to the several rows of behemoths ahead of us and shut down the engine.

A few hours remained until dusk. The bamboo mats were unrolled beneath our trailer, providing a cool place to lie in the shade. In many parts of Africa, men who are friends hold hands; in a similar spirit, some of the turnboys lay with their arms across each other and snoozed. Some of the drivers sat on stools and talked. Obadiah picked up a copy of the Tanzanian weekly *Business Times* which he had found and soon came upon a news item that told of a crisis at one local factory: two top employees had died of AIDS, and the owners were having trouble finding replacements. (In Africa, it often happens that wealthier men, who can afford more prostitutes, are harder hit than poor men.)

"AIDS," Obadiah said. "It is very bad around here. This part of Tanzania, all the way to Uganda, it is the worst place in the world for AIDS. I know people who work at this factory." "UKIMWI," as the acronym reads in Kiswahili, was a word constantly on the lips of the turnboys.

Bradford and I went to buy food in the town market. He bought small bags of a number of exotic spices, and then lingered for quite a while over the apothecary stall. Nearby, several men stood next to bathroom scales; I paid to climb aboard, was told my weight, and then continued to a small shop to buy a Coke. Through the shop's glass countertop was visible a box containing perhaps a gross of condoms in plain white cellophane wrappers. The box had no markings and no brand name, which made me think it had been donated by an AIDS program. "Are they free?" I asked. "No, they are two hundred shillings," the shopkeeper replied. This sum took on meaning in the coming days, as I saw that a room for the night generally cost four hundred shillings, a woman for the night cost four hundred to six hundred shillings, a filling meal cost from eighty to a hundred and fifty shillings, and a bottled soft drink seventy shillings. In other words, these condoms cost a local the equivalent of seven or eight dollars apiece—a sum that would buy you a dozen in the United States.

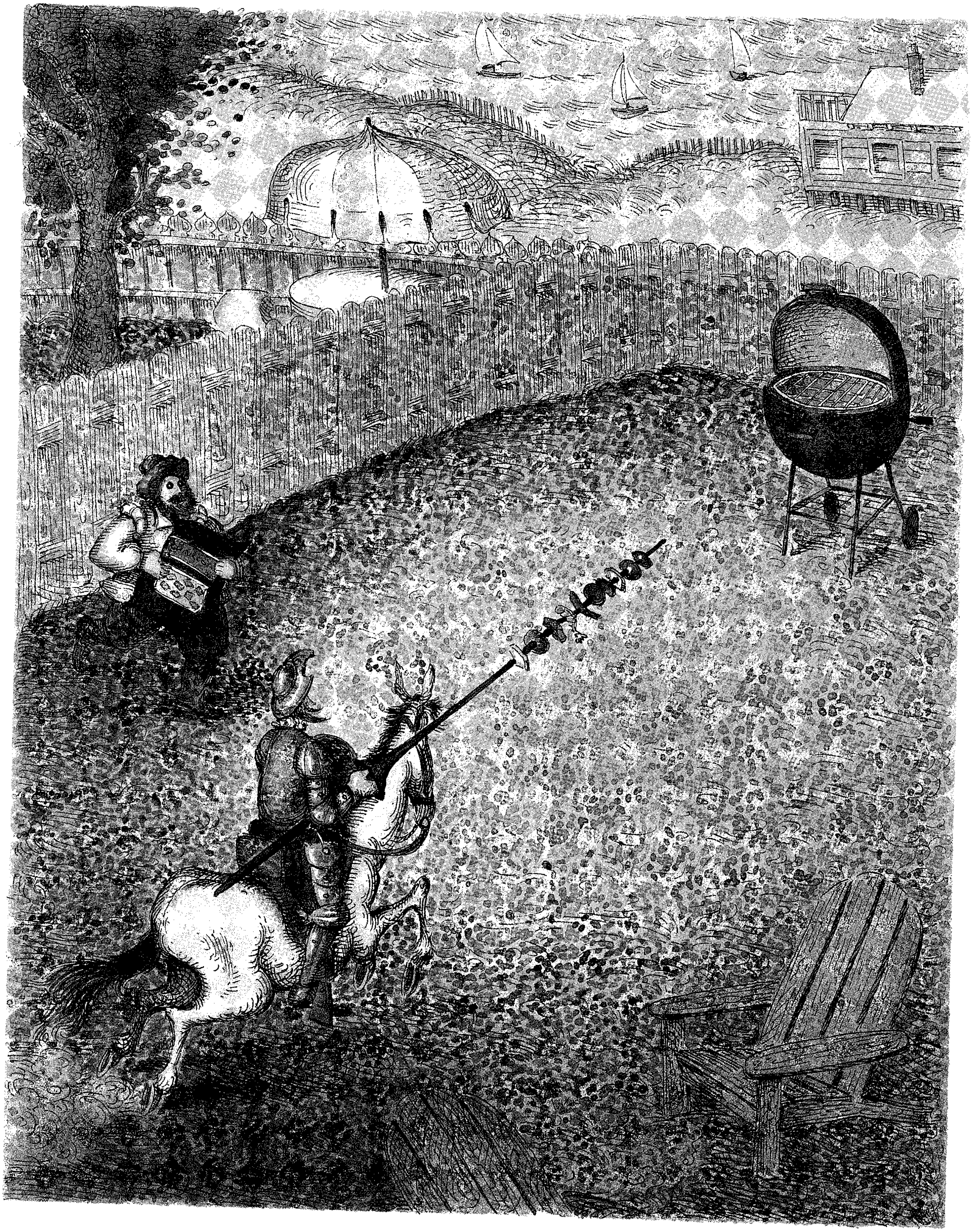
After dropping off our groceries for the turnboys to deal with, we set about finding lodgings for the night. Malek, who said he had a local friend in whose house he could stay, offered to help us look, because he knew Mwanza. Many hotels were full, and almost all displayed AIDS-warning posters in the lobby. When the only vacancy we could find turned out to be slightly expensive, I suggested to Bradford that he and I take a double and split the cost. He wasn't interested. This surprised me until, on our way down the stairs from the fifth floor, Malek loudly explained, "He wants his own room so he can take a woman!"

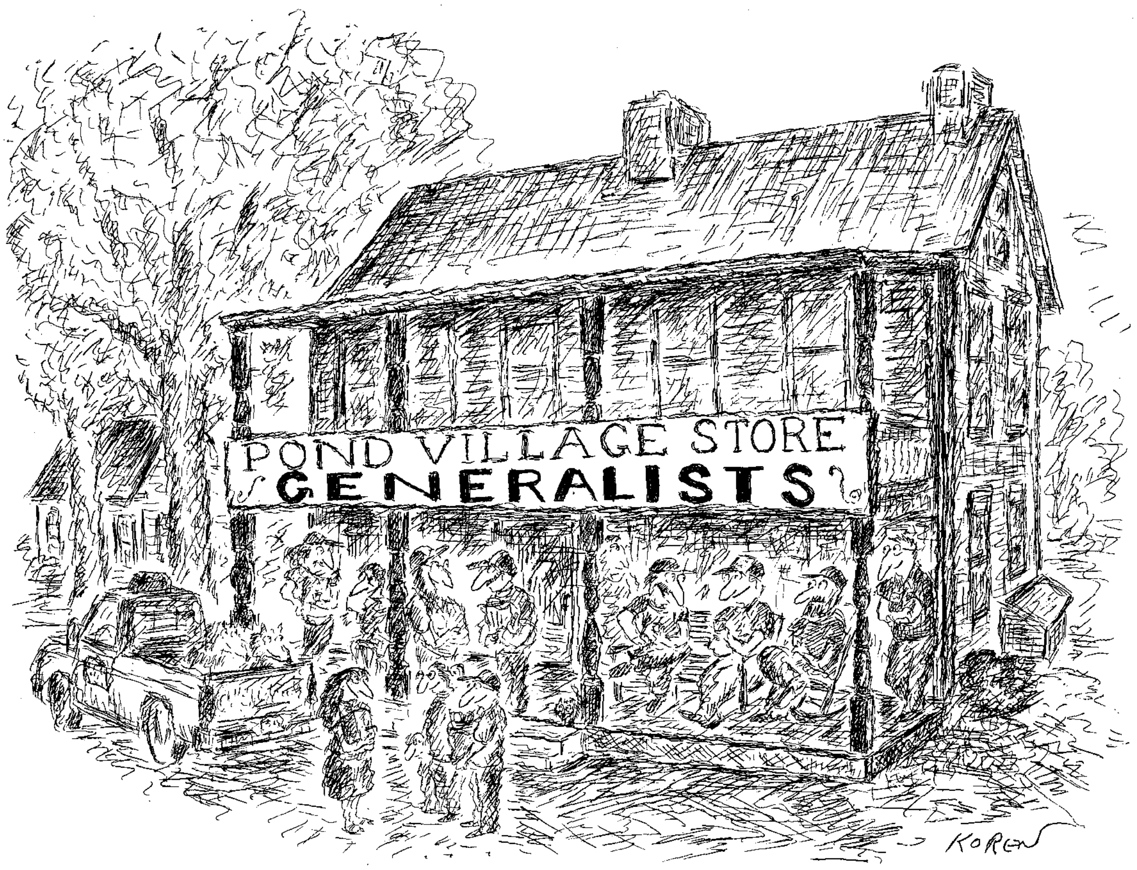
Bradford was typically silent, but once Malek had departed he struck back. "His friend here is just a woman," he said fiercely. "He sleeps with her every time he comes here."

It took me a while to understand that in this situation "woman" automatically

ARTIST AT LARGE BY JOHN O'BRIEN

DON QUIXOTE IN THE HAMPTONS





signified "prostitute." Women here didn't sleep with you just for the fun of it. But the guys never used the word "prostitute." To say, in a strange town, that you were sleeping with a woman was to say it all.

Bradford and I went out on the town that night. In the near-empty bar of our hotel, we had a beer and a chat with the bartender, a woman whom Bradford seemed to like. Then, at a place lit by blue lights down a side street, we sat at the bar and drank Tanzanian beer and watered-down cognac. I noticed the care with which our waitress served us the beer—a method that all waitresses in Tanzania used. Her job wasn't just to set the bottle in front of us and rush off to the next customer. It was to place fresh glasses before us, then to set out the bottles of beer, then to wipe the dust off the necks of the long-necked bottles by putting her hand around the neck and pushing it down the bottle. (After my third beer of the night, this began to look erotic.) The waitress then tipped the glass, and poured the beer. You watched while she served you; you were meant to watch.

"Which one do you like?" Bradford asked me. He was referring to the women. I nodded toward our waitress. "You can have her, then." I lifted an eyebrow. "She likes you." I gave a little snort at this, but knew that what he meant was that they were all available, or probably were. Though increasingly drunk, I explained to Bradford that I was happily living with my girlfriend in New York, and wouldn't be interested in sleeping with the waitress. I took out my wallet and showed him Margot's picture. She was sitting on her red Schwinn Hollywood on East First Street on a hot July night, flashing a big smile. Bradford reached into his wallet for a photograph of his wife. "She is at work," he explained. The picture showed a middle-aged woman sitting at a large, neat desk. On it were a telephone and a huge rubber stamp. She was not smiling; smiling was not the custom in photographs here.

"Did you say she is your girlfriend?"

"Yes."

"Then it is fine! She is not your wife."

How to explain this? "But she is like a wife."

Bradford looked at me pityingly, as though I had chosen a very early retirement.

I sought another approach. "Besides, you heard what Obadiah said, right? This is one of the worst places in the world for AIDS."

Bradford agreed with me on this. "Yes, I know," he said. "To bring that home to your wife, to then pass it on to your children—very bad." He had a daughter and two sons, he said. He waved his hand and shook his head. So he did understand AIDS. I felt glad, and bought us another round.

As we entered the lobby of the hotel, I was surprised by Bradford's desire to have just one more at the hotel bar. I did not have the stamina, and so climbed the stairs to go to bed. But the wall between our rooms did not extend all the way to the ceiling, and an hour or so later I awoke to the noise of whispering voices as Bradford and someone else entered his room. The only other sound was the rhythmic, almost ultrasonic peeping of an Abyssinian nightjar. I listened to the little bird and I listened to Bradford, and I wondered, Does he use condoms? In the morning, I heard a woman speaking softly again, and as I came back from the bathroom saw her rounding the corner of our corridor, the hotel bartender, skirt whirling behind.

SAMMY and Francis and many more trucks had arrived overnight at the Esso station, wedging themselves into any unclaimed space in the parking lot, of which there hadn't been much to begin with, and lining the road on either side. Approximately thirty trucks were now waiting for the fuel, which, when it arrived, would be pumped out of the single pump. I took out my books and prepared for a long wait.

The drivers and turnboys chatted, smoked, drank tea, went on errands, and sat guard, some of them on mats under the trailers, some of them seated in the cabs. Obadiah took his work clothes, still mud-caked from Isebania, to the communal spigot by the Esso office and washed them by hand. Half an hour later, jeans were draped over the rearview mirrors of Fleet 19, shirts over the windows, and socks and underwear over the windshield wipers, which were flipped away from the glass. So hot and arid was it that everything dried in about fifteen minutes.

The captive drivers attracted a stream of venders, selling everything from used clothing to pencils and spare parts. What caught my eye, looking down from the cab, was slices of freshly cut pineapple being paraded by on platters on the heads of young women; the mouthwatering fruit passed by inches from my face. Malek saw me staring and bought several slices. He also bought a thick bunch of succulent, sun-warmed grapes. I had the confidence born of a month of health in unhealthy places, and my hunger for produce was so fierce that I bent my rule against it: the grapes, I concluded, might be O.K. if I just squeezed their innards into my mouth, avoiding the skins, and the pineapple should be fine, assuming it had been cut by clean hands.

Other young women we saw evidently had nothing to sell. Two joined Malek in his cab, and I thought they might be old friends of his until he gestured at them and said, "Do you like these pretty girls, Mr. Teddy?"

"Very pretty, Malek! No, thanks!"

They left after a while, Malek deciding against further involvement, but others filtered through the tall maze of trailers all day long, smiling, climbing in to have a chat, going on their way. You did not need to seek the women out.

Just as I joined Stephen, Malek's shy, retiring turnboy, to do my wash at the communal spigot, two fuel trucks drove up to the pump. All talking in the area seemed to cease as their drivers began to unreel their hoses to replenish the station's supply of diesel. The lull was followed by the roar of engines being started in anticipation of the new fuel. Within minutes, Stephen and I could no longer speak, because of the epic rumbling coming from the grand ignition. A dark cloud of smoke gathered over the compressed mass of dirty trucks. There was a generalized jostling as those nearest the pump began inching forward, and those in the rear inched after them.

Perhaps three of the thirty trucks had fuelled up when, as quickly as it had started, the whole thing shut down. Obadiah had joined us by then, and I saw him sigh.

"What's going on?"

"They have shut down the electricity," he answered.

"What do you mean? Did they blow a fuse?"

"No, no, it is shut down everywhere." He waved his arms to indicate the surrounding neighborhood. No darkened electric signs were available to corroborate his statement, but I remembered an advertisement I'd seen in the *Business Times*, announcing strategic power rationing. This was what it meant.

Delay, I was beginning to appreciate, was one of the few certainties of this life. There was the delay of breakdown, and of border-crossing hours. There was the delay of refuelling and the delay of bad roads. And then there were the delays that to the Africans were simply life lived reasonably; namely, twelve or more hours a day spent sleeping and resting and stopping to eat.

The drivers, because of their freedom, seemed to handle the delays better than the turnboys, who were tied down by poverty and job description. Obadiah moped, but Malek wasted no time in reverting to pleasure mode once the pump went off. "Boss! Mr. Teddy!" he called as I walked back to Fleet 19. "You will come join us? This is my friend in Mwanza!" He gestured at a shapely woman standing near him, whose dark skin was set off by a brilliant-yellow dress. She wore yellow flip-flops.

"Sure," I said.

"We will be down the road. Bradford knows where."

An hour or two later, as the sun was starting to set, Bradford and I were on our way to the New Gardenia, a bright-blue two-story building with a pleasant front porch set back a little from the dusty street. I had already noticed this place; it always had a good crowd. Drinking beer at a table on the porch were Malek and his friend.

"They still have rooms!" he said encouragingly. "Go inside now!"

Bradford and I walked in. The bar was full of men and women, and other women sat in upholstered chairs. Most of the lighting came from red bulbs. Bradford spoke to the bartender about rooms, and a woman appeared to show them to us.

The rooms were as run-down as the public areas were nice. On our way to the last available single, we walked through a cloud of mist from a shower stall with a broken pipe; water was hissing out loudly. The single was next door to this shower stall. The only other available room was a nearby double, with two small windows looking onto a small second-floor patio that got a lot of foot traffic, and this was more expensive. But tonight Bradford wanted to share it. The woman had us sign the register, and I puzzled over what to put under the heading "Tribe."

"Put 'Europe,' " Bradford suggested.

"Norway," I wrote, the land of my ancestors.

The flimsy door to the room was held shut by the meagrest hook; to judge from the doorjamb, the door had been kicked or pushed in two dozen times. The beds had mosquito nets, but these were badly torn. As we unpacked a few things, I noticed a thin column of tiny ants marching across my bed.

Bradford and I went out to find dinner, but I could hardly eat what looked like a delicious omelette, because of sudden stomach cramps: it was the revenge of the fruit. We returned to the New Gardenia, where my experience of the rest of the night was aural. From my bed I picked out the voices of Malek, Bradford, and Sammy amidst the general laughing, squealing, and hollering from the bar. From the second-floor patio there came the occasional whispering of women and the bellowing of men. Near my head, mosquitoes buzzed faintly, seeking the holes in the netting over my bed; I lit a mosquito coil. Periodically, when the cassette tape at the bar was being changed, the amplified call to prayer from the local mosque drifted in the window. Around midnight, I was awakened by Bradford's return. Soon after that, some stupid drunk began pounding on our door and yelling, "Ishmael! Ishmael!"

"He's not here," Bradford replied in Kiswahili. "You've got the wrong room."

"Ishmael, Ishmael!" Again the pounding. Once more, I thought, and the door would fly open.

"He's not in here!

"Ishmael!"

Finally, there came silence. Then the same voice, this time yelling through the shutters from the patio: "*Ishmael!*"

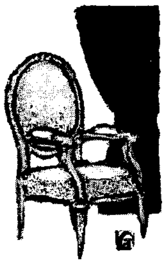
"My name is not Ishmael!" I yelled back.

By noon the next day, because of some aggressive creeping forward by Bradford, we were pumping our fuel, hoping against hope to make it by the power-off time. "If it goes off now, we can pump the rest by hand," Obadiah said. Using a hand pump that adjoined the electric one, he explained, a man (alternating with another man) could pump seven hundred litres in three or four hours. But we finished under electric power, and so did the others in our convoy. As a small truck from the national electric utility cut into the line at the pump right behind us, we had the last laugh: two minutes into the fill-up, the electricity went out on *them.*

THE next night's destination was Shinyanga, and Malek was excited. He was Tanzanian by birth, he explained when we stopped for tea in the village of Mabuki, and much of his family lived in this region. We had to wait for our tea, and, while Bradford washed his hands in a corner of the restaurant, Malek went on to say that he was way overqualified to be a truck driver but had been reduced to it by a confidential "controversy" in his life. "You know, I used to play guitar in a band," he said. "We played in all the clubs in Dar, all the clubs in the country. We made records! We played rock and roll, and we played *soukous.* We did everything."

I somehow knew that this was true. "But then what happened?"

Bradford returned. Malek said he would tell me later. He flirted in the local language with the young woman who brought us our tea, and finally she turned away, blushing.



"See? She would!" he told Bradford. "I asked her if she would like to pack her things now and come with us," he said to me jubilantly. He was famous in these parts, he assured me. "If someone is coming from the bush, like a monkey, he will still know me. I am like their president." Moreover, he continued, "I know all the women! They love me here!" We might stay in Shinyanga, he added, for a day or two.

"O.K.," I said. "For the women?"

"No, no. In Shinyanga, I get my parents' bless on me, then I feel much better. You cannot go through the country without stop at your parents."

Around midday, we pulled over again, in a village called Maganzo. It resembled a score of other places we had stopped in for tea: a handful of one-story buildings set far back on either side of the dirt highway, to give trucks plenty of maneuvering space. A small stand of trees wilted in the sun at one end of town. As Bradford eased the truck off the dirt road, our own wake of dust engulfed us and the venders who besieged our convoy, climbing up on the trucks' steps to offer us the usual bread, soft drinks, and dried fish. Malek, increasingly animated at being back on his home ground, beckoned for Bradford and me to follow him.

We took seats on benches in a smoky barbecue shed. Beams of light slipped in through the slats, illuminating sides of goat hanging from hooks on the back wall. Hosts of flies jumped from the meat to us and back again. A man with a cleaver stopped hacking away at a beef carcass long enough to hear Malek order three skewers. The flies landed. He started hacking again. The flies took off.

Three men already there knew Malek, and one shook his hand, and then mine and Bradford's; the others, who were eating, offered their forearms, and we grasped them. A boy appeared with a dish of water, and we dipped our fingers in and used a towel he offered. A bowl of salt was set down, and a bowl of chili powder. In the background, the skewers sizzled. The men licked their lips. One wiped his mouth on a sleeve and began to chat with Malek in Kisukuma, the local tongue. Malek asked me in English if I knew that there were diamond mines nearby, and explained that the mound of earth we had seen in the distance was part of them. The man spoke with Malek some more and then peered behind him and out the door. He put an oily finger back between his cheek and lower molars and withdrew something very small. He put it in Malek's hand. It was an uncut diamond, translucent, irregular, like something you might find on the beach. He described it to Malek in low tones. Malek handed me the stone and said, "He wants twelve thousand dollars. Are you interested?" The diamond was a little larger than the seed of a grape.

Our dish of hot goat was set in front of us, and the diamond went back into the mouth.

LATE in the afternoon, we arrived in Shinyanga. As usual, the road had taken its toll: Malek's trailer listed to one side, and he had turbocharger ills besides. "We might be here two or three days, getting these fixed," he said happily.

The people of Shinyanga looked like Malek—lighter-skinned than Bradford or Obadiah, with a lot of Arab blood and sometimes blue or green eyes. Malek took Bradford and me on a walking tour of town and did, in fact, seem to know everybody. Assuming the role of host, he even installed us in a hotel costing a thousand shillings a night—two dollars and fifty cents, or more than double our usual tariff. Dinner, he announced, would be at the home of his cousin Walid. There was time before that to rest, and I bought a couple of beers for the turnboys.

Joining Obadiah and Stephen, I met Cromwel, a mechanic. Cromwel, aged twenty-nine, roamed Transami country in a radio-equipped Toyota Land Cruiser driven by a rotund "convoy leader" named Mwalimu. Mwalimu, a former truck driver, was now one of four lower-management trouble-shooters who zipped from country to country attending to the mechanical breakdowns, bureaucratic snafus, and other difficulties experienced by Transami drivers. The two had caught up with us that afternoon, and would provide an escort all the way to Rwanda. Though Cromwel in a way served as Mwalimu's turnboy, he was a skilled and highly paid one. With the first beer, we talked about the trucks (of course) and the books we all were reading. Obadiah had finished the Ngugi and the Achebe and was into the Tolkien I had brought from Nairobi. He confessed he really did not care for that one. Cromwel was a fan of the thriller novelist Nelson DeMille, and was currently reading "The Charm School."

With the second beer, the conversation turned to women, and Malek's prodigious appetite. Obadiah and Cromwel debated whether it was natural to have a strong sex drive, and, if so, whether you should try to control it. The terms of this talk confused me. If a strong sex drive was natural, they both indicated, one should not try to control it. But if such a drive was unnatural one should control it. "Natural," apparently meaning God-given, was the operative concept. Was Malek's randy behavior, they asked me, natural or unnatural?

I had to shrug: I didn't know. They debated this and other matters, finally agreeing only on the perils associated with amorous pursuits.

"I tell you, my friend!" Obadiah cried, waving his hands in the air. "You are fine until you are in a bar and drinking one or two beers, and then a woman with big buttocks walks by, and—oh my God!"

At the home of Malek's cousin Walid, we were served a huge quantity of good food—chapati bread, fried fish, curried-chicken stew, and lamb-and-egg pie. Afterward, over small cups of strong coffee, I asked Malek to tell me more about the controversy in his life. He turned serious, and we scooted back a little from the circle of men seated on a thin rug. In a low voice, he told me that when Tanzania invaded Uganda to unseat Idi Amin, in 1978-79, he had entered the Army and become a captain in the military police. He received training in Israel and Cuba and then participated in the campaign. In its late stages, he was put in charge of some important prisoners. But, in what sounded like an admission of guilt, he said, "I made an arrangement and they escaped." The Tanzanian Army charged him with corruption. A United Nations inquiry, however, determined that the escapees were political prisoners who had been unfairly held, and arranged for Malek to receive asylum in Kenya. That was how he and his family had come to live in Mombasa, though Tanzania was home.

This tale of exile and redemption had an epic quality that made Western life, or my life, seem humdrum. He filled in more details later, in the courtyard of our hotel, but soon became distracted by a flirtation with the waitress, and by the drinks she brought. When mosquitoes started to get bad, Bradford and I turned in.

In the morning, I asked Malek how he'd done.

"Do you know the word *hanjam*, Mr. Teddy?" I did not. "It means a lot of sweet nothing. It can also mean lots of work but no pay. You understand?"

"It means you struck out."

"Yes!"

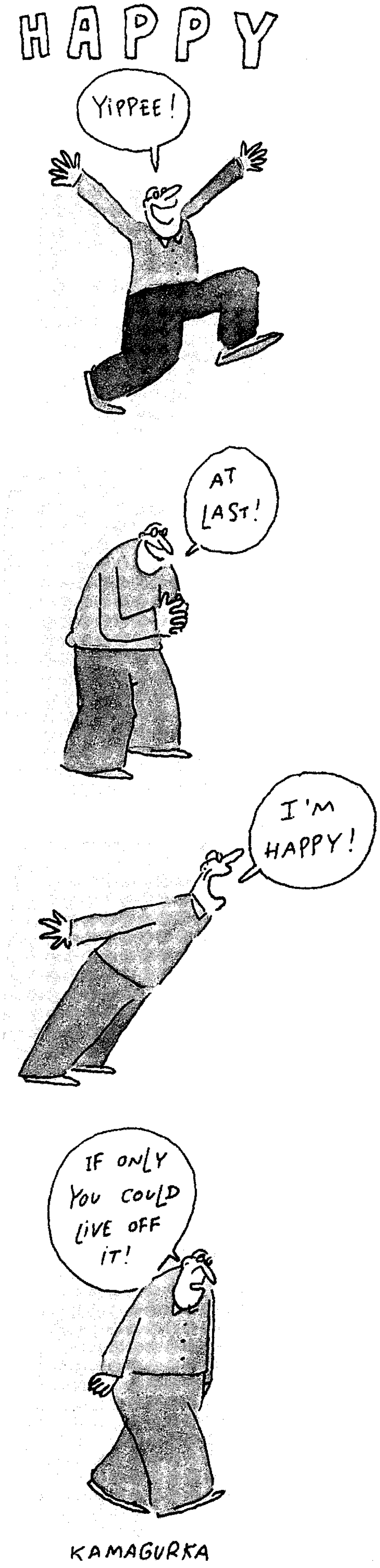
MWALIMU, the convoy leader, dispelled Malek's hope of a prolonged stay in Shinyanga by insisting that we leave by the following afternoon. Dusk found us in a market town called Kahama, whose dirt square was filled completely with about twenty overnighting trucks. A fierce old man wielding a bow and arrow and a receipt book approached, eying me suspiciously. He was the *askari*, or night guard, of the square, and his services were compulsory. Bradford and Malek anted up. Then, after some searching, Bradford, Malek, and I secured the usual sort of lodging, and within a couple of hours Bradford and I were seated in the usual sort of bar.

This one was swarming with mosquitoes. It was off a side street near our lodging and was lighted with blue fluorescent bulbs. There was a bartender, whose bar was secured against robbers by bar-to-ceiling bars, and there were two waitresses, who wore flowing blue muumuus and, over their heads, the lovely beaded scarves known locally as *kikwembe*. They did not have much to do; we were about the only customers. We sat on low couches around the far, dark end of the room and stretched out our legs around low tables in front of us. For the first time, we were able to order Primus, the Rwandan beer whose bottles we were hauling. It cost nearly as much as our room, and was quite strong. As our waitress went through the serving ritual, she bent forward. Underneath the muumuu she wore nothing.

Bradford was characteristically quiet, and things were starting to feel a bit dull, when Malek entered with Sammy. Malek's appearance somehow electrified the room. It put me in mind of his earlier incarnation as a rock and roller. Within moments, he had made Christina, our waitress, smile, blush, and then burst out laughing with some little remark. He sat down. She returned with a drink for him. He talked to her some more. "I am discussing with her how much I will teach her sexually," he informed me. Christina's English was not so good, so he repeated the quip in Kisukuma, and she cracked up again. "She already loves you very much," he continued, to me. "She wants to do anything you want. I have told her that you are afraid of AIDS, and that she must just suck. She says fine." Christina did not appear to have followed this, which was O.K. with me.

Malek and the others had by now become skilled at running interference for me with the women in bars. They explained what I felt they had come to believe—that I was overly concerned with AIDS—and they told the women not to take it personally, because this was a typical *mzungu* fear. Sometimes I would buy drinks for the women to show that it was nothing personal.

Outside, I asked Malek about exactly


HAPPY
YIPPEE!
AT LAST!
I'M HAPPY!
IF ONLY YOU COULD LIVE OFF IT!
KAMAGURKA

what went on when you paid to be with a woman. Did he wear protection?

"*Soksi*?" (That is, "socks"—slang for "condom.") "No. But I do not put it in them. I only have them suck. You are paying them, they'll do what you want." The usual price was between five hundred and a thousand shillings, he said, but since he spoke their local language they'd do it for three hundred, "and sometimes they'll even pay me."

I liked Malek, but the subject was depressing. Often the castoffs of men who had other wives and discovered that they couldn't afford them, these women had children to feed and no skills. Engaging even briefly in prostitution could mean that their village would refuse to take them back. A given evening at a truck stop provided only so many potential clients; if a woman were to displease them by insisting on condoms—well, plenty of other girls were willing. The same held true for anal intercourse, which many drivers requested.

We walked into another bar, nearer our hotel. Malek was immediately recognized by the bartender ("Everybody knows me!") and bought us a round. No sooner had he told me he needed someone for the night than a woman in a silver dress appeared and jokingly upbraided him ("She is asking why I didn't see her the last time I came through") until he calmed her down with the usual cajoling and "words to make her laugh." Also, apparently, a request for a date. Bradford, too, soon settled on a girl, and I went to bed.

In my room, I thought about a conversation I had had in the truck that day with Obadiah. He had been angry again at Bradford, this time for going too fast over bumps. We were smoking. Obadiah was also worried about AIDS. Whether his worries about the disease were preëxisting or were partly brought on by me, I didn't know.

"A truck driver I know said some people don't get AIDS and some people do, and there is no reason for it," he said. "It is like the way some people have car crashes and some do not. Some get sick from smoking and many do not. It is life."

"You mean you just live with it—it's your fate."

"Yes."

"But isn't this true—that you can smoke less, drive slower, and wear a condom?"

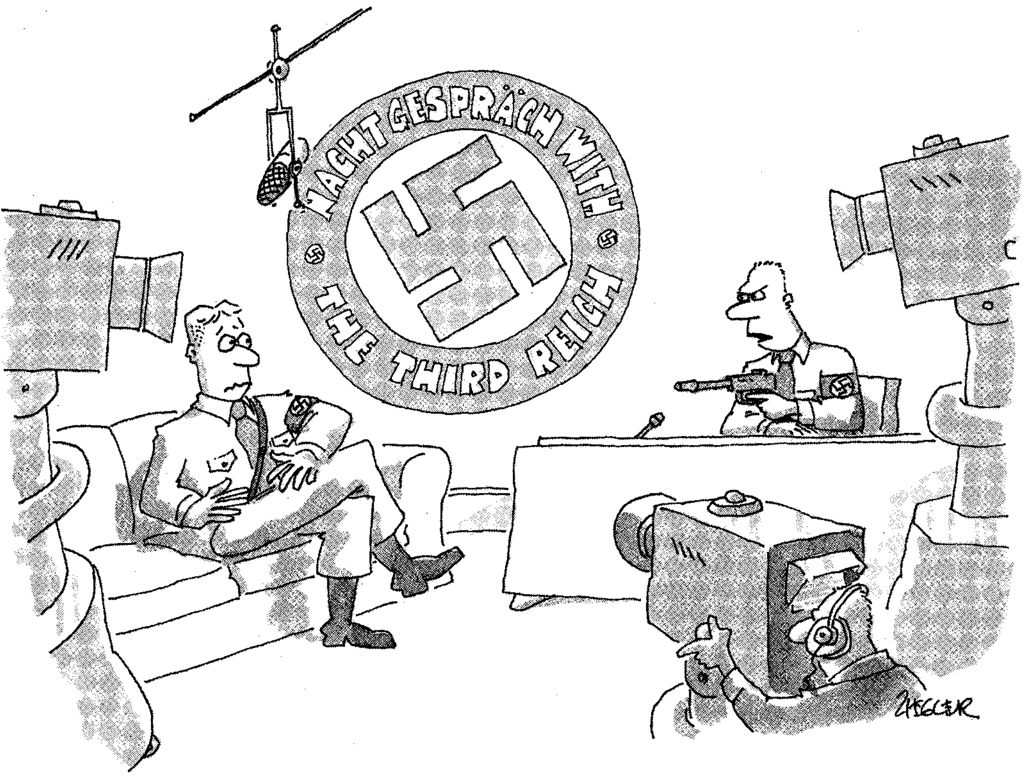
"Yes, that is true."

"So it's not all black-and-white."

"No." He paused. "But life with precaution is no life."

That one I had to think about. Obadiah—who if he had been brought up as I had would probably occupy some executive position—had to spend most of his best years away from his wife and kids, and within about a fifty-foot radius of a semi rig. His pleasures were smoking and, much less frequently, beer and women. "Life with precaution" would subtract from his life the two cheaper principal pleasures—and probably all three, because of the difficulty of restraint when you had a beer in your belly and a "woman with big buttocks" on your lap. His attitude of recklessness pained me, but I found it hard to condemn him for it.

On a recent flight in Africa, I had sat next to a sixty-year-old Canadian who smoked, drank, and told me he didn't take his heart medication even though he had suffered a near-fatal heart attack the year before. This man held a doctorate in engineering. At my hotel in Nairobi, I had met a foreign correspondent for a North American daily. He was an ambitious, smart fellow who was particularly interested in the subject of AIDS, because, he explained in the bar, he had slept with women all over the world. "But I'm cutting down on the fucking now, and trying just to stick to blow jobs," he said. Cutting down, it turned out, meant that he had had unprotected intercourse with "maybe six or seven" different women in the past three months. I said that that probably wasn't a good idea, and he said yeah, he knew.


NACHT GESPRÄCH WITH THE THIRD REICH
ZIEGLER

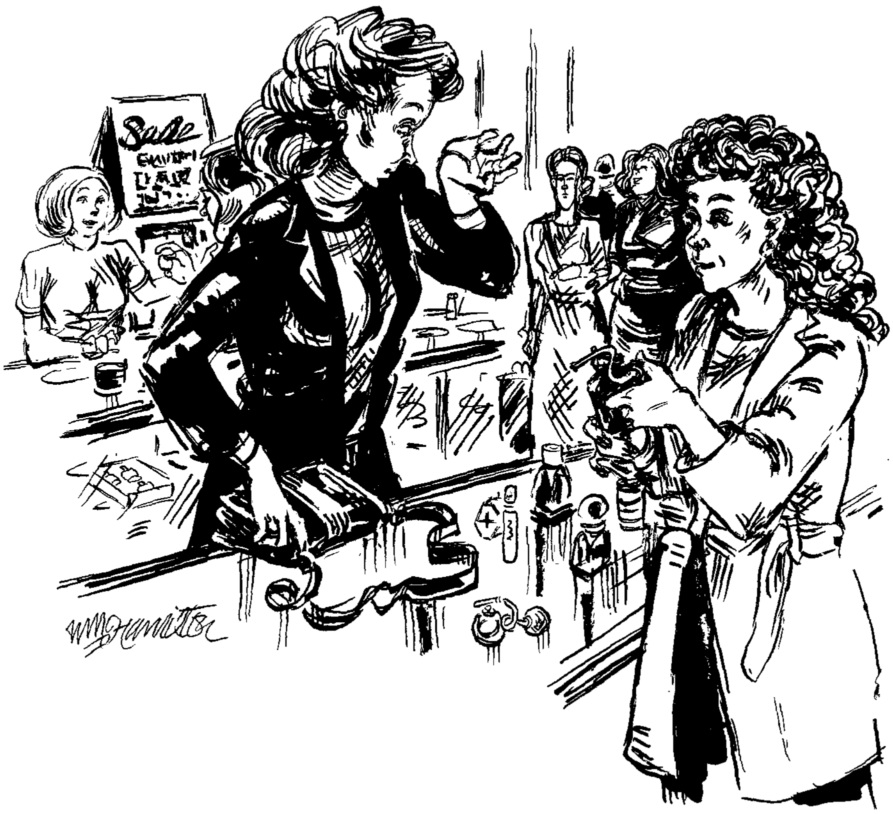
"I am most disappointed in you, Herr Stuffel. I was told that you would be a much more amusing guest."

THE next morning, on a remote stretch of highway, Malek's truck broke down—cylinder-head problems—and by the end of the day all four big Transami trucks and Mwalimu's Land Cruiser were parked together by the side of the road. The two days that followed were like camping. The men spent a lot of time seated in circles beneath or next to a trailer, telling stories and drinking tea. A group of drivers paid a diplomatic call on the local goatherds, who lived in huts just around the bend. With a little warming up, they sold us delicious fresh milk for our tea, directed us to their well and to a muddy livestock-watering pond about a mile into the woods, in which we bathed, and even supplied us with chickens to augment those Malek kept in a wooden cage built into the underside of his trailer—emergency food, for occasions like this. In the morning, we heard the pipes of the boy goatherds, steering their goats around our encampment. At night, we climbed up on top of the containers, away from snakes, to lay our blankets out. And the turnboys, though they did not make a big deal about it, all slept with weapons at their sides, ranging from hatchets to tire irons. Their caution belied the idyllic look of the countryside.

All the work was done by the turnboys—they were kept busy cooking (mostly chicken or goat stew and *ugali*, a chunky starch dish, at which Obadiah excelled)—and by Cromwel, the mechanic. Replacing the *silinda hedi* was a time-consuming job for skilled hands, and Cromwel seemed to have them. The more covered with oil he got, the happier he seemed to be; there in Malek's engine compartment, he had no boss but himself. Bad cylinder heads, he explained to me, were a fairly common problem. "Transami has a shop that does nothing but recondition them—I used to work there. But the reason these trucks break so much is that everything in them is reconditioned. You see, we do not buy new parts. They are costly and must be imported. We fix the old. They last for a while, then they break again." He called out to Stephen to pass him a *tork renchi* from the *tulboksi*.

Part of the *mzungu* mystique, I came to realize, was that the faraway lands where people like me lived were the source of all this machinery—of its manufacture and design. Trucking companies there got their parts new, "factory fresh." Somebody in *mzungu*-land actually got to drive trucks when they were new. Perhaps most essential, I thought, taking an unexpected pride in the fact, was that we named the trucks and named the parts.

The first afternoon, it rained, but Cromwel worked on; the truck "bonnet" provided him with a roof, and he was so coated in oil he looked waterproof. I sat in the cab and read and was tutored in Kiswahili by Francis and slept. Early the second afternoon, the skies cleared, the clothing dried, Cromwel finished, and a large hawk landed on a snake crossing the road by the trucks. It stood there for a long time, pecking away at the snake, as we watched from the cabs.



"Denial, by Beverley."

• •

RUNZWEWE, our last stop before Rwanda, was another collection of small, low buildings at a crossroads in a barren landscape. All had roofed front porches and rear courtyards and were set back far enough for rows of trucks to park in front. We arrived in midafternoon, famished, and entered a café.

The tall, thin Somali men who ran the place wore skirts. Our waiter spoke the menu: chicken, goat meat on rice, or beans. Most ordered goat meat. On the wall across from us was a portrait of Saddam Hussein; directly above our heads was an AIDS poster. It conveyed its message graphically, showing, left to right, a man in four phases of emaciation. He was practically dead in the last drawing; a cemetery with headstones underneath made the message clear. Mwalimu read the caption out loud—"*Utapunguza uzito kwa muda mfupi*"—and cracked a joke in Kiswahili, which I missed.

"What does it say?" I asked as the others chuckled.

"It says, 'You'll lose weight in a short time,' and I said, 'They should call it the Truck-Driver Diet.' "

Though it had clearly been drawn by an African hand, the poster carried a very Western message. The idea behind it was that a simple dose of correct information could make a huge difference in people's lives. The challenge was to print up enough posters, and hang them in enough public places.

But already I could see the barriers.

"You know," Cromwel said, musing on the poster. "Some people are immune from AIDS."

I told him that was not known for sure.

"But they are not certain? Then I think it could be true!"

Francis said that he had heard many different stories about AIDS. "First, we were told the *wazungu* brought it," he said.

"*Mzungu* scientists were the first to identify it, but they think it came from here," I replied. Francis looked at me as if to say, *Well, of course they do.* "Then they said that truck drivers brought it!" he continued. "There was a time when the women wouldn't sleep with *wazungu* or drivers. Now they will, but they want condoms with people they don't know."

"Yes," Cromwel said. "They want condoms with unmarried people. But if you talk with them and they come to trust you, then you don't have to."

"That's right," Francis agreed. "If you're married, with kids, it's much better. And if you are healthy."

"You mean looking healthy," I said. "You can look healthy but still have the virus that causes AIDS."

Though Obadiah understood this, the others were less familiar with the idea of being infected but showing no symptoms. I explained it, realizing as I did that understanding H.I.V. infection really required a rudimentary knowledge of biology, of how infections occur—and not only an understanding of it but a belief in it, for, as they listened and I talked, I could see my words getting filed in the mental drawer labelled "Possible Explanations."

And if you did get AIDS, Cromwel added, there was always a virgin.

"What?"

"Yes, you know, if you sleep with a virgin it will often take away your AIDS," Cromwel assured me. He knew people who had done it. I winced, and told them it wasn't true. If you slept with a virgin, you would probably just give H.I.V. to the virgin. They didn't argue with me, but I doubt whether they believed me. Modern medicine, which I took to be a challenge to traditional beliefs, they saw as merely a complement to them. My rebuttal of every African idea about AIDS probably sounded closed-minded to them.

Stretching my legs after the meal, I was relieved to run into Obadiah by the truck. Obadiah was educated—in other words, he saw things my way. As I walked toward him, I saw him looking warily at a mentally disturbed woman weaving around the parking lot, jabbering and shouting to herself.

"She is bewitched," he whispered to me. I gave him a look of incomprehension. Was this a joke? But neither Obadiah nor any of the others tended to be ironic. "Yes, it is a spell. It happens often in these small places."

I felt despairing, and the feeling was increased by the rooms we rented. They were the worst yet. There was no light—Runzwewe had no electricity—but even in the dimming daylight the sheets were obviously dirty, and the filthy pillow had no pillowcase. Bradford said his room was the same. I rested awhile and checked my watch: only 8 P.M. Maybe I could get a drink.

When I went out on the hotel porch, I could hear the faint noise of a generator and of American voices arguing: somebody had a TV. Around the trucks, it was dark, but I heard laughter on the other side and wandered over to some lantern-lit tables in front of one of the small places across the road. There a round innkeeper named Bora was joking with the drivers. They introduced me, and she continued with a story she'd been telling. It turned out that when the authorities went to the house of this man in Uganda who'd died of AIDS they found dozens of packages of unused condoms. Ah, I thought, there's a moral here, of the right kind. But Bora went on, "And all the condoms had dates that had expired!"

Knowing murmurs circled the table, and I asked Francis to explain. "These condoms, when they are too old, contain germs," he said. "And that's how he got AIDS."

"From expired condoms? That's ridiculous."

The woman asked Francis to translate my English. She looked hurt and offended, and replied sharply to him. "She says you should not doubt her. She knows—she is from Uganda," Francis said.

I touched her arm and tried to have Francis explain that I did not doubt her word, merely the interpretation of the facts. I could see that this was a losing day for Western medicine. I ordered a beer, quickly drained it, and returned to my bed.

The route to Rwanda took us over a brief but sudden ridge of red-soil mountains. The trucks groaned up the steep grades, and whined slowly down their far sides, the drivers taking it very easy: littered at every sharp turn and at the bottom of every hill were the wrecks of trucks whose drivers had been careless. Some of the wrecks were recent and spectacular. This time, Obadiah didn't complain about Bradford's snail's pace.

Malek, as usual, drove the fastest, and soon he had the punctures to show for it. We all pulled over on a shoulder behind him as it started to rain, and the turnboys paired up to attend to the tires. Francis was the last in line. "You know

A DIGRESSION

Having confided to the heavy-lipped
Mailbox his great synoptic manuscript,
He stands light-headed in the lingering clang.
How lightly, too, he feels his briefcase hang!

And now it swings beside his knees, as they
From habit start him on his evening way,
With the tranced rhythm of a metronome,
Past hall and grove and stadium toward his home.

Yet as the sun-bathed campus slips behind,
A giddy lack of purpose fills his mind,
Making him swerve into a street which for
Two decades he has managed to ignore.

What stops him in his tracks is that his soul,
Proposing nothing, innocent of goal,
Sees no perspective dwindling on between
Gold-numbered doors and frontages of green

But for the moment an obstructive storm
Of specks and flashes that will take no form,
A roiled mosaic or a teeming scrim
That seems to have no pertinence to him.

It is his purpose now as, turning round,
He takes his bearings and is homeward bound,
To ponder what the world's confusion meant
When he regarded it without intent.

—Richard Wilbur

what they say when you get punctures?" he asked me.

"No."

"They say you forgot to pay your girl this morning."

"So who do you suppose didn't pay today?" I asked, playing along. We had discussed this subject before, Francis explaining that, with women you knew, the gift of a "compact" (cassette tape), a bottle of perfume (Francis had gestured to his underarms), a nice T-shirt, a pair of shoes, or a length of fabric was as welcome as money. "Did Malek cause this?"

Francis shrugged. "Could have been anybody," he said.

The final drop, into the river valley that marked the border, was scenic, and excruciatingly slow: the grade was ten per cent, and the drivers were hypercautious. Eventually, we rounded a bend that presented us with a view of a small Tanzanian customs station perched on the steep hillside, a compound of Rwandan customs buildings, across the valley, and, between them, a bridge over a wild and glorious cascade of water, identified on my map as the Chutes de Rusumo. Mist rose from the churning waters, partly obscuring dense semitropical foliage that listed toward the river from its banks. Leaving Tanzania proved to be a simple matter, but when I saw the drivers blocking their wheels and parking for the night, planning not to cross till morning, I told them I was going to walk down to the bridge and take a look.

As one, they warned me to stay. "The soldiers will shoot you," Bradford said.

When I expressed my doubts, Francis told me what had happened to another truck he had driven in Rwanda. I suddenly remembered that at the Transami office in Mombasa, Harry Hanegraaf, a white Kenyan who was the manager of land transport, had shown me a pile of snapshots of various trucking mishaps from the past two years. There were several impressive wrecks, but the most memorable was the picture of the cab of what had evidently been Francis's rig. It had been heavily sprayed with machine-gun fire and, from what I recalled, set ablaze. Francis told me that two years earlier his truck, as part of a convoy of government-escorted trucks travelling on the road west of the northern Rwandan town of Ruhengeri, had been ambushed by a squad of guerrillas. After stopping the trucks by blocking the highway with debris, the guerrillas told the drivers to run; they then looted the trucks and, to underscore their message, destroyed them.

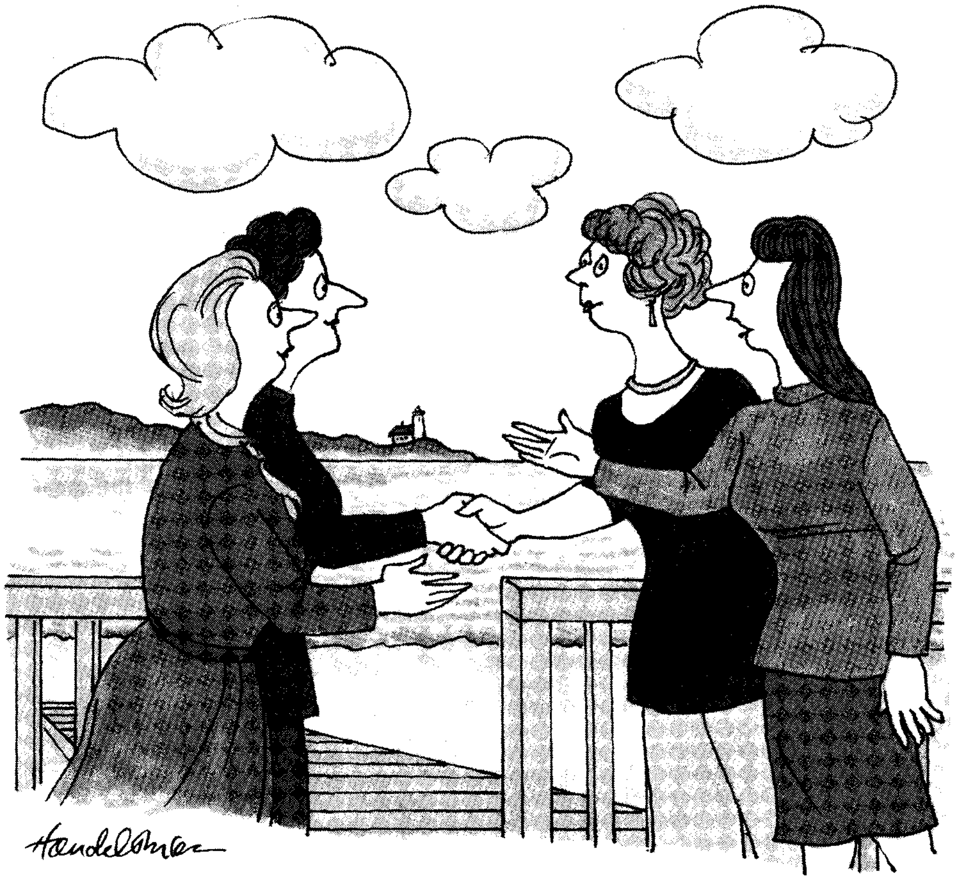
BRADFORD had a way of dealing with officials that drove Obadiah crazy. "He is so stupid!" he whispered vehemently as Bradford got down from the cab to open the container for the Rwandan customs man. "He sits with a face like this"—he did a good impression of Bradford's pugnacious stare—"and pretends he doesn't understand anything. And he thinks this will work. Well, let me tell you, it doesn't work!"

All the paperwork had gone smoothly, if slowly, that morning, the drivers presenting their thick sheaves of bills of lading, export certifications, and identification documents at the single window. Around the side of the building, at the same time, Obadiah had helped me negotiate with the black-market money changers who swarmed around us in their furtive way. All that remained was to drive away.

But, even with the paperwork in order, the guard who controlled the barrier gate across the road had to be dealt with. Bradford's stone-faced truculence had worked at the Tanzanian border—he had had to pay only the official duty, which Transami advanced him. But that was not going to cut it here. "You have to talk to them, to show them you are not afraid," Obadiah said, looking in his rear-view mirror. "You have to compliment them, and then you have to insult them for wanting money that is not their due. Bradford does not understand this."

Bradford hoisted himself into his seat a few moments later, livid, and jerked the truck into gear. He had had to pay the guard twenty dollars, he said. "Out of my pocket! Transami should pay for this! But they pay me nothing!" Obadiah, wisely, kept quiet. Bradford was so mad that he ignored the gestures of two more soldiers, who rose to their feet as we approached, apparently signalling us to pull over. It was not until a third soldier, waving menacingly, made us understand that we were supposed to be driving on the other side of the road—in Francophone Rwanda, you drive on the right, and not on the left, as in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda—that Bradford veered across the tarmac, still muttering. "These people! Rwanda!"

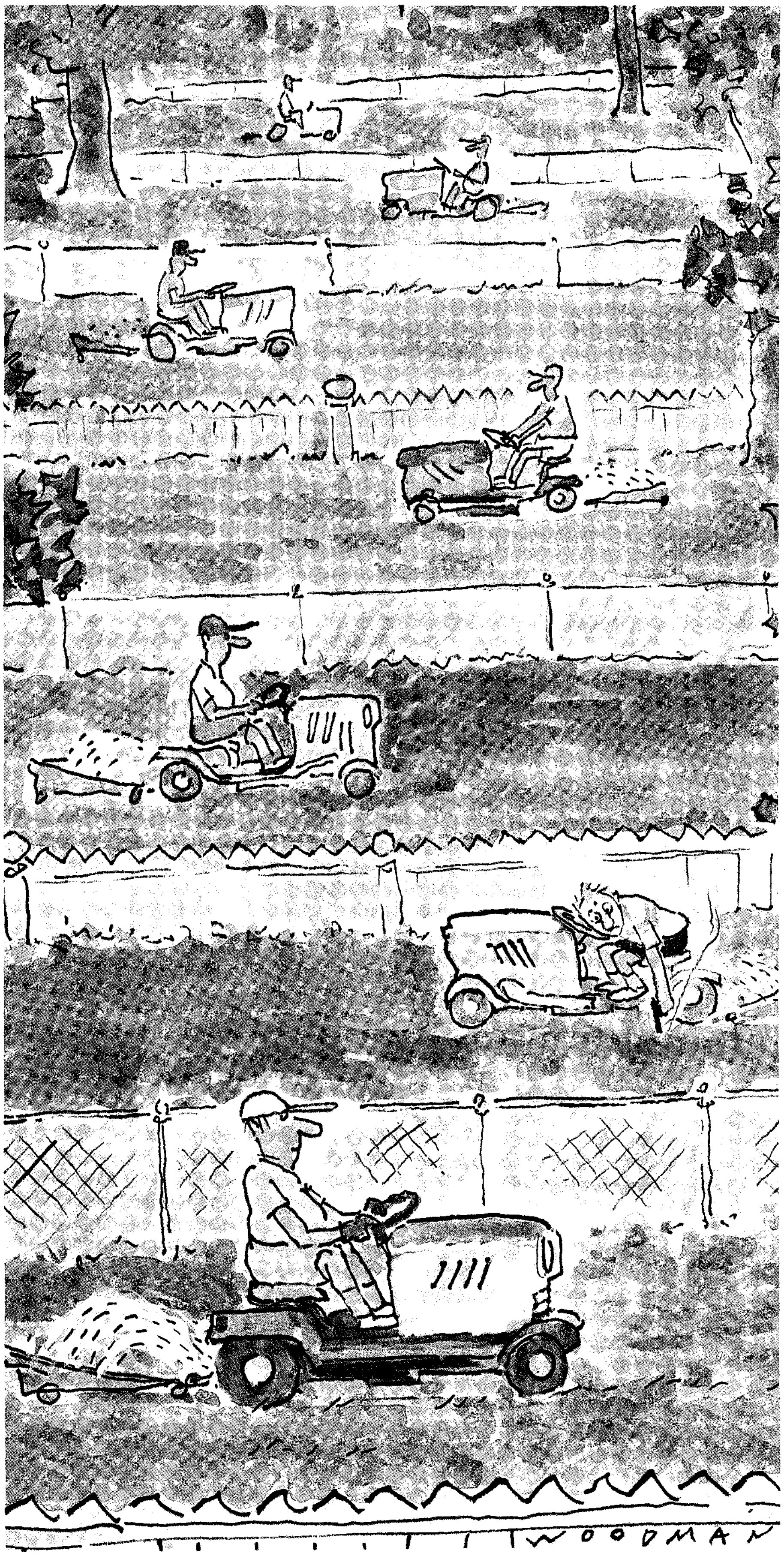
During an afternoon of low-gear rises and drops, Bradford, the tension showing



"Phyllis Rodham Kane, meet Susan Rodham Peck and Laura Rodham Smolinsky."

ARTIST'S NOTEBOOK BY BILL WOODMAN

DEATH IN THE AFTERNOON



on his face, swerved and shook his fist to keep kids from grabbing rides on the trailer. He even stopped the truck, ordering Obadiah to chase them away. The reason, he said, was that kids would drop off and then cross the road without looking—many were killed this way. But I also sensed that Rwanda annoyed him in general, and that keeping kids off the truck helped him keep the country at bay.

Late the second day, we reached the hilly capital, Kigali. We passed near the modern-looking center and then continued out of town to a dingy suburb, where industry and low-grade housing were mixed. This district, Gikondo, was the home of the Magasins Généraux de Rwanda (MAGERWA), the national warehouses. In order to protect international trucks from the depredations of local thieves while they awaited customs certification and did their loading and unloading, the government had carved from a hill two huge holding yards, surrounded by red cliffs and by fences topped with barbed wire. The rear yard was for flammable loads, most of them twin-trailer petrol trucks returning from fuel depots in Tanzania and Kenya. The other was for general cargo, and we pulled up at its entrance. Obadiah dropped off with our documents as armed guards unchained the metal front gates, raised a traffic boom, and waved us in. Bradford headed for a corner of the great space where one Transami truck was already parked.

As the drivers parked their trucks, I took a walk around. The surface was not pavement but hard-packed, oil-saturated soil. A concrete building housed some fetid toilets and some overflowing sinks for washing dishes and clothes. The hundred-odd trucks in the lot were divided into national ghettos, the brand of truck varying with the nationality: the largest cluster, driven by Somalis, consisted mostly of old orange Fiats, Italy having administered parts of Somalia; the next largest consisted of Mercedes-Benz ("Benzi") trucks, operated by the big German-owned Tanzanian shipper Interfreight (Germany ruled Tanzania early in the century); trucks of Rwandan, Burundian, or Zairean registration were usually Renaults; and our vehicles, of course, a legacy of British empire, were Leyland. (One had even been used in the Falklands War, Harry Hanegraaf said.) The only other *mzungu* in the area was a vender of frozen Lake Victoria perch from Mwanza, who was selling the big fish from a refrigerated trailer.

The length of our stay in Kigali depended on the actions of two parties. Transami's sister company in Rwanda, Transintra, had to supply paperwork for the loads we were dropping off and picking up; and the MAGERWA customs personnel had to accept the paperwork. The order from Transintra to unload didn't come until the third day, Friday, and Bradford and Obadiah returned from the MAGERWA warehouses in dark moods, the container still on the trailer. There was a huge line, Bradford explained, and they didn't come close to making it to the front. And they couldn't try again until Monday.

There was more to it, Obadiah told me later, when his fury had somewhat subsided. To unload in any reasonable amount of time, you had to tip the clerks, had to tip the crane operator, had to tip the *askari*—you had to play the game. Bradford stonewalled, as usual, with the result that they got nowhere.

"I guess maybe that's the price of being honest," I suggested, looking for a positive side.

"It is not a question of honesty. He is just stingy!" Obadiah said.

Malek, Sammy, and Francis did unload, and Sammy and Francis took on new containers to take further into Rwanda and into Zaire, respectively, on Monday. In the meantime, we waited. Life in the yard had its interesting aspects, most notably the commercial ones. After we washed our shirts, boys came by to iron them. There were no electrical outlets around; the boys used portable black irons that had hot coals in an internal compartment. Venders of used clothing, *nguo za mitumba*, made the rounds night and day. Flyers advertised a showing of the film "Pretty Woman"—not in a theatre, Bradford explained, but in the house of someone who had procured a VCR and a bootleg tape. Scores of venders not so favored by the gatekeepers offered their wares right outside the front gate, besieging the drivers as though they were tourists emerging from a fancy hotel.

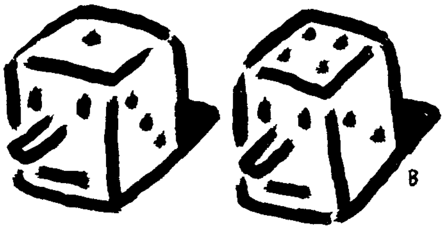
At night, the drivers and I would generally escape MAGERWA for a hotel known as the Snake. This was a nickname; on the room receipts it said "Logement Kalibu Gikondo." Except for Mwanza's New Gardenia, it was the most brothel-like of the cheap hotels we stayed at.

There were no signs. To get to the Snake, we walked up a steep road rutted by rain to the top of the Gikondo hill. Here, amid small houses, were two tall white iron gates opening onto a brick patio, the beer garden of the Snake. These gates were the sole entrance to the compound. The rooms all opened off two small courtyards farther in, past the office, and these, too, could be sealed off with iron gates. I didn't like the place at first. A drunk yelled at me as we walked through the crowded beer garden to get to the office. A crowd gathered as we registered. I was the first *mzungu* they had ever had, an unsavory-looking man in an unbuttoned shirt, who was named Alphonse, explained. He handed me a receipt and a carbon copy of it. "That one you give to the girl," he said, in French, "so that she knows what room you're in."

Another employee then asked gaily, "You want to fuck my wife?" His name was Andrew, and I think now that he was just giddy at his first chance to pander to a *mzungu*, because later he became friendly and quite helpful. The woman in question, who stood smiling, turned out to be Zairean and a great favorite of Malek's, and of course was not Andrew's wife at all. To my surprise, the room was clean and better than average: the Snake, I came to appreciate, was underpriced in the way of Las Vegas hotels, which make their real money off you in other ways.

Apart from Andrew and Alphonse, the personnel seemed to be women. They would serve you your Primus, then sit with you while you drank it. They would come to your room if you wanted, but there was no obligation—the usual arrangement. In the morning, the tiled showers had hot water—a miracle—the sun shone down on the courtyards, and the women became maids, who would sing as they washed up. There were good mirrors, each with an Afro comb hanging from a string. The Snake was a favored spot of the local military commanders, Andrew told me, and no one ever bothered you there.

Well, almost no one. As Cromwel, Sammy, and I were having a few beers the first night, a drunk guy stood up and insisted on sitting next to me. He wanted to thumb-wrestle. I consented, and each of us won a round. But then he wanted to yell loudly in my ear. He was high on something besides beer. Andrew interposed, telling him to lay off, and he did for a while; Andrew then said to me that the man had been smoking some kind of dope, and this was why he was so aggressive. Finally, escorted by my friends, I retired to my room. A while later, there was an insistent knocking at the door and then an "*Ouvrez la porte!*" I opened it. Alphonse, silk shirt unbuttoned to his waist, stood there with a young woman, who looked far more virtuous than he.



"You want?" he asked, with a big grin.

"*Non, merci. Elle est très jolie, mais non. Bonsoir.*" I bolted my door. The knocking resumed. I ignored it.

But after that first night things calmed down. We checked out every morning, as was our custom (you never knew what the day would bring), but every night we returned, becoming regulars at the Snake.

After the convoy had spent nearly a week in the yard, however, everyone's spirits began to deteriorate. Various incidents set them back. Obadiah had a pair of jeans stolen from where he had hung them to dry over the chain-link fence. Cromwel had his flashlight (*torchi*) stolen from the Land Cruiser while Mwalimu was inside the Transintra office. MAGERWA's immigration officers, whom Obadiah had told that I was *bwana*, the boss, apparently had begun to doubt it and were looking for me. Malek started getting fevers, which reduced him to spending most of the day lying in his cab; he said it was malaria. Obadiah got diarrhea—underripe bananas, he thought. And I was with Mwalimu when he got into a fender bender with a reckless-driving government official, and had to go to the police station. There he was informed that the accident was being judged his fault.

"How could that be?" he asked.

"It would never have happened if you had not come into the country," the policeman said.

I started noticing coffins everywhere. About eight were stacked up outside a craft shop in Gikondo, and it seemed that a small funeral procession with a rough-hewn, unfinished casket held aloft passed MAGERWA every other day. Was it AIDS or the civil war? Kigali, where between thirty and thirty-four per cent of the adults of reproductive age were infected with H.I.V., was the closest thing to an epicenter that the epidemic had. But at night we would sometimes hear shells exploding, and automatic-weapons fire. Then, one morning, a man at the Snake said he had heard on the radio that peace talks between the government and the rebels had broken off, and an invasion of Kigali was imminent. I decided it might be a good time to visit the American Embassy.

The center of Kigali, while more lively than the yard, was also much more frightening. Soldiers were everywhere; streets were sealed off for security reasons; a manned tank surrounded by foxholes was parked at a main intersection. I ate lunch at a restaurant overlooking the street, and stood up when everyone else did to watch a demonstration of perhaps forty people waving blue banners and singing. This, I was told by an American woman standing nearby, was not the rebel insurgency but a political demonstration by the newly constituted Social Democratic Party—one result of the simultaneous "opening" of Rwandan politics toward a multiparty system.

The marchers turned the corner, and we started to sit down, but then shots were fired and people outside screamed. Demonstrators began running back down the street past the restaurant. I hastened to the door, but the American woman told me to sit down. She lived in Kigali, she said, and explained that the soldiers were very nervous. A week before, she and a friend were being interrogated on the street by a soldier when the soldier's rifle accidentally went off, sending a bullet through the narrow space between their heads. They had escaped with only a nicked ear. Today, things sounded different.

Half an hour later, she directed me to the American Embassy. Officials there gave me some details about the insurgency, showed me maps, and indicated the location of the nearest rebel stronghold, about forty-five miles away.

"Is that all?"

"Well, they were here in the city two months ago," one official said. At least, they thought so: the possibility existed that the government had staged the gun battles for its own purposes.

An Embassy official named Larry Richter took over, and assured me that the rumor that the talks had broken down was a result of a misunderstanding; the two sides had merely concluded the latest in a series of negotiations. Richter was candid and friendly. The shooting at lunch, an employee told him, had resulted in the death of a demonstrator—nervous soldiers had fired on the procession. He thought I had more to worry about in Gikondo, where burglars dressed as policemen were said to be entering houses and beating the occupants, and where other opposition demonstrators had been brutally attacked. He warned me to be careful, and wrote down the phone numbers of his Embassy office and his residence. "Give a call if you're still here on Sunday—we play volleyball at my place," he said. I tucked the numbers into my back pocket.

A red motorbike-taxi took me back to the yard through an afternoon shower. But where the trucks had been there was only empty space. A driver who was parked next to the empty space told me that Fleet 19 had unloaded its beer bottles and been sent to a yard owned by Transintra, to take on cargo, and the driver's turnboy said he'd show me where.

We walked for an hour and entered another industrial neighborhood—this one, for better or worse, largely devoid of people. The Transintra yard had an open-air repair shop and a grassy space on which were parked Fleet 19 and another Transami truck, driven by a veteran Swahili driver named Zuberi. Resting near a brick wall in the back, slowly being absorbed by vegetation, were the components of a large building crane—engine, swivel, boom segments, everything. This was to be our load, Obadiah told me sullenly—not the bags of coffee they had hoped to get for a quick trip back to Mombasa. The crane, bound for tiny Burundi, to the south of Rwanda, would add days to what already felt like a lengthy trip.

We talked until the sun began to set and swarms of mosquitoes wafted over from the marsh next door. Cromwel and I, it was decided, would go to the Snake to reserve rooms for all of us. Mwalimu offered to drive us over.

We alighted at the entrance to the MAGERWA yard, and Mwalimu sped away. When we had walked no more than twenty paces toward the steep hill leading to the Snake, two soldiers armed with carbines stopped us. They were dressed in fatigues, with jackboots and berets. One bore his rifle properly, with the barrel behind his shoulder, but the shorter one had his reversed, so that the barrel pointed up into the nose of anyone he spoke to. They appeared to be sixteen or seventeen years old, and both, it soon became evident, were drunk.

Thus began a fearful several-hour saga in which the soldiers, illiterate and unable to speak any language but Kinyarwanda, followed us to the Snake, harassed Alphonse and Andrew, and demanded that I surrender my passport and accompany them to an undisclosed location. That seemed like a bad idea, so I stalled, and took refuge in my room. Once, when they had left momentarily, Andrew came running in to say he'd heard that the surlier of the two planned to return and stab me. (Cromwel said it was too bad we couldn't get the soldier alone "and bash his face in.") Andrew first changed my room and later persuaded the owner of the Snake, the fattest man I had met in Rwanda, to seclude me in his personal wing of the compound. Bradford came in, too.

Several soldiers had by this point gathered at the gate to the Snake. I used the owner's phone to call Larry Richter at his home. Not long before midnight, the owner opened his door to a small, armed contingent of tall blond men from the Embassy who grabbed me by either arm, brushed past the Rwandan militia, and spirited me away in a Mitsubishi Montero that had been left running at the gate.

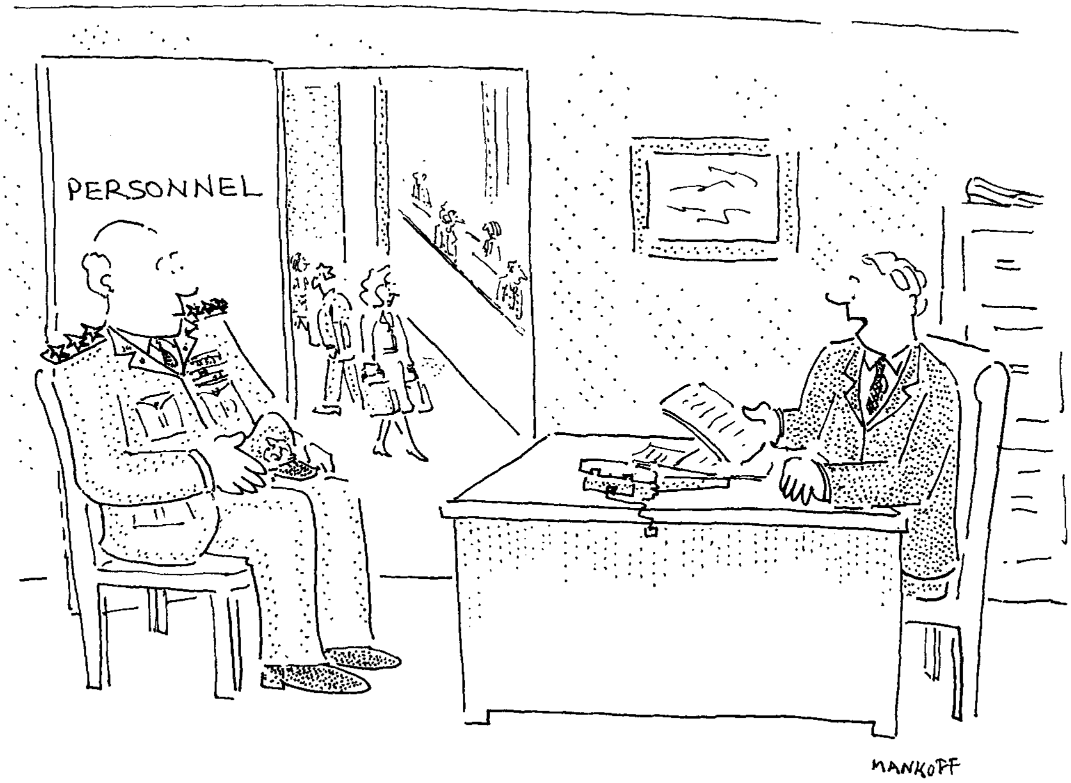
For four days, I lay low at an Embassy residence, emerging only to check on the progress of the crane loading. It was delayed, in an irony that escaped none of the drivers, by the lack of a small mobile crane needed to lift the pieces of the big one onto the trailers. Then, once everything was loaded and secured, departure was delayed again by Transintra's failure to provide a new freight manifest and other customs paperwork. In the end, we left without the paperwork, carrying only Transintra's promise to send a courier to intercept us before we made the Burundi border.

I had nothing physical to show the drivers of my ordeal—no black eye, no stitches from a stab wound. However, filling in at an Embassy volleyball game, I had managed to mangle my right ring finger; it could no longer extend itself. A doctor at the game couldn't diagnose the injury but said she didn't think that the finger was broken. Seeking sympathy, I showed the injury to Obadiah, who had played volleyball at the national level in Kenya. Maybe he had seen something similar, I thought.

Obadiah looked at my hand, and then I noticed his: *He didn't even have a right ring finger.*

"A container landed on it when we were loading three years ago," he explained. "I had to miss four months of work."

For a long time, I did not worry any more about my finger.



"An impressive résumé, General, but remember—department-store security is different from national security."

• •

TO fly from Kigali to Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi, takes half an hour. To drive by car usually takes five to six hours—"which tells you a lot about the road," Larry Richter had said to me. But to go by truck took us from Sunday morning to midday Wednesday, or roughly seventy-seven hours—which tells you a lot about truck driving in Africa.

By noon the second day, we had reached the remote, mountainous border. "Here is very far, very deep," Obadiah said as we parked. A river marked the actual line, with tiny settlements on either side and lush vegetation all around. We wouldn't be crossing right away—Transintra still had not caught up to us with the customs papers. Instead, we would wait at the border until the messenger arrived.

There were no lodgings, no real restaurants, and not much to do. Across the road from us was the dormitory of a small detachment of soldiers. I shied away from them, but Obadiah made friends. It was more peaceful here, he said, and the soldiers were nice. Bradford slept in the truck that night, and Obadiah and I underneath. When Obadiah slept outside, he put his shoes right next to his head, to keep them from being stolen. I did the same, and was awakened in the morning by a goat tugging on the salty, smelly leather of my cross-trainers.

Obadiah and I ended up the next evening in the small dark room of a woman who served us charcoal-broiled goat, unleavened bread, and tall glasses of a locally brewed banana wine called *urwagwa*. I had offered to buy him dinner, because I had seen his discomfort the night before when a crowd of hungry children gathered around the meal he was preparing by the side of the truck. "I cannot eat if hungry people are watching," he said, and, in fact, he hadn't. So now we were in a dark room, where hungry people couldn't see us.

We drank more *urwagwa*, and Obadiah said that it was probably what the soldiers were drinking before they hassled me—it was common in Rwanda, and cheap. I wondered as I drank if *urwagwa* normally brought on that kind of ugly response, but concluded that the general situation in Rwanda—AIDS, and a civil war that had killed tens of thousands of people and displaced nearly a million—was a more likely cause. The wine engendered a certain congeniality, and Obadiah and I sat for a long while. I had told him about some pretty *mzungu* women at the volleyball game in Kigali, and he now asked me, knowingly, if I had "made friends" with them. No, I told him, I hadn't, and he suggested, "They are worried about AIDS, like you!" No one, he assured me, could stop sleeping with people forever. "One day—after a month—they will want to do it," he said. We laughed, and he lowered his voice. "Ted," he said earnestly, "a friend of mine is sick. Are any of your pills for gonorrhea?"

What friend could it be, I wondered. And what pills were for gonorrhea? "Like penicillin?"

"Penicillin, yes, but better is amoxicillin, or tetracycline. Ampicillin, too, will work."

I was surprised to hear the names. "No, I'm sorry," I answered. "I don't have those." He didn't bring it up again for three more days, but I started wondering just how Obadiah had got gonorrhea, if that was what had happened. Gonorrhea is one of the diseases linked with a high risk of catching H.I.V. If Obadiah had it, that meant that even the best-educated people probably weren't using condoms. This, in turn, implied, of course, that they could well die, and along the way perhaps their wives and children. The impulse to lecture all the men, instead of just inform them, was practically overwhelming.

THE next afternoon, the messenger arrived with the papers, and two days later we reached Bujumbura. Some of the hills en route had been extremely steep; as the convoy crawled down one, Bradford and Obadiah told me about a Transami driver who, a year before, had descended too fast, lost his brakes, and killed seven people, many of them squashed by his container; it had been filled with mattresses, and they were strewn everywhere. An ambulance rescued the injured driver moments before an angry mob of villagers would have torn him to pieces.

Bujumbura lay at the bottom of the biggest and final hill, and had a far more relaxed atmosphere than Kigali, which was in some ways its sister city. It was a city at peace. Also, it enjoyed a site on the shore of Lake Tanganyika—a wide, murky sea, across which the dark mountains of western Zaire were sometimes visible. Even Bujumbura's equivalent of MAGERWA was situated on the lake. From its blacktopped surface and through its high chain-link fence we could hear the lapping of water on the beach and see the tips of waving palm trees. At night, we heard the snuffling of hippos, which trundled up from the beach in search of choice garbage in the dump across the street. The sky, early in the morning, was filled with thousands of bats above a large tree half a mile away from us.

Bradford was annoyed at me for having done what I thought was a good deed—giving Obadiah a little money. "How much did you give him?" he demanded when he saw Obadiah smoking from an entire pack of cigarettes. (Turnboys normally bought them singly.) I told him half the actual amount, and he was still annoyed. "He will use it to get drunk!" he said angrily. "You should not give him money." The real problem, I figured, was that their poverty was one of the things that kept turnboys near the trucks—without money, there was really nowhere else to go—and also made them beholden to the drivers. Money was the drivers' control. I had stepped into the balance and, at Obadiah's behest, distorted it.

I had given him nine hundred Burundi francs—the equivalent of about four dollars. With a certain amount of misgiving, I watched as he left the lot with a local driver at about 4 P.M., and waited to see if Bradford's prophecy would come true. Would he just use it to get blasted? But an hour and a half later the two returned, a nice, sober spring to their steps. Obadiah had spent his remaining seven hundred francs, he told me without being asked, on a meningitis shot. Hadn't I heard? There was a big outbreak of meningitis in Burundi—two hundred people had died so far. Bus transportation between cities had been halted to try to slow its spread. I had received such a shot before coming to Africa but hadn't dreamed that I might need it. I secretly congratulated Obadiah on his caution—I hadn't known him as well as I thought.

Though the Transintra agent had visited us and promised to try to expedite things, it looked as if this were going to be another long wait. After unloading the crane, we would have to load thirty-odd tons of coffee. But first the agent would have to locate a container to put the coffee in, and he didn't know of any in the vicinity. The drivers rested, talked, slept.

The second day, Bradford offered to show me the way into town, but Obadiah pulled me aside as we prepared to leave.

"You know the gonorrhea?" he asked when we were alone. Not having heard more, I had assumed it had got better. "Well, it is much worse. You know—pus, and everything. That girl in Kigali was so very pretty, but—"

"What girl in Kigali?"

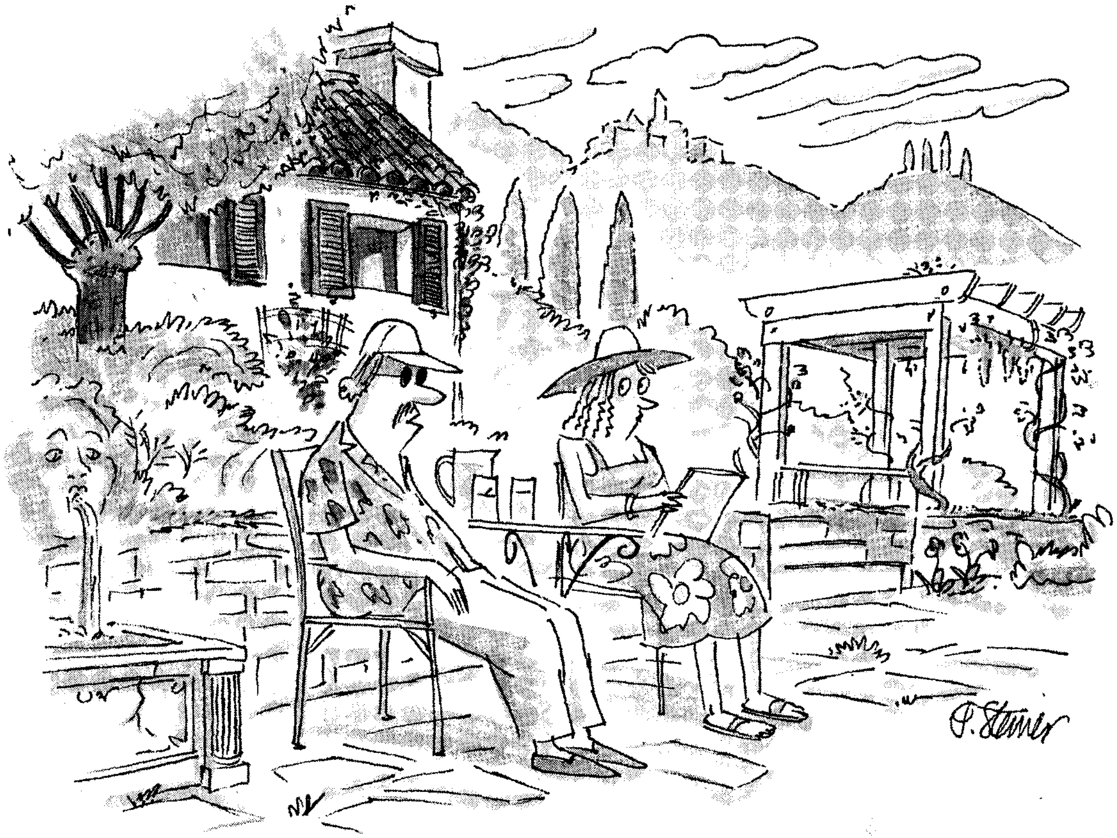
"I told you, the night the soldiers came and you gave me your key." I had tossed him my room key on the way out.

"Oh, no! That was when you got it?"

"Yes! So here is what I need—tetracycline, amoxicillin, or ampicillin." He even seemed to know the dosage in milligrams, so I had him write it all down in my notebook. And off I went.

Visiting the pharmacy put me in mind of my own health. I went by the local United States A.I.D. office, where a doctor agreed to look at my finger. By now, it was red and sore, still couldn't extend itself, and had assumed an odd gooseneck shape. He manipulated it, said he thought I'd snapped a tendon, and suggested I consult a hand surgeon.

"Can you suggest anyone locally?" I asked.



"You didn't tell me Tuscany doesn't have cable."

He looked at me as though I were joking. The country didn't have X-ray machines with the definition needed to diagnose my injury, he said, much less a specialist. "But maybe in Nairobi," he added. I thanked him and returned to the lot.

Obadiah was thrilled to see the packets of amoxicillin capsules I had picked up for him. "Oh, you are such a nice *mzungu!*" he exulted. Then I handed him another purchase from the pharmacy—a small package of Prudence condoms, price twenty Burundi francs, or less than a dime. "Next time, use these," I said, in a mock man-to-man tone. Looking at the box, he didn't know what they were. "Open it," I said. He pulled out the four cellophane-wrapped condoms. He still didn't know what they were. "You don't know?" They didn't look any different from condoms you would buy anywhere. I opened one and removed the latex circle.

At last, there was a sigh of recognition. "Oh, yes."

Obadiah had finished reading a well-thumbed Perry Mason mystery, "You Find Him, I'll Fix Him," and left it for me. I lay on my side and opened the paperback to a small card that he had used as a bookmark. On it was a paragraph in his handwriting: "Short, fat, and built like a barrel, but all the same the best description I can give her is that she reminded me of Mussolini in her size, same ruthless, jutting jaw, dark complexion . . ." This was not, I would later confirm, a passage copied from the book. Obadiah admitted sheepishly that he had written it while he was sitting, bored, in the yard that afternoon. He said the Perry Mason book had inspired him, and so had the way I was always writing things down. I told him he should write the whole book.

The winds the first night had been hot, but dry and strong enough to keep us cool. This second night, though, the breeze slowed and reversed direction; humid air from the lake poured in and soon had us soaked. It also brought a huge quantity of mosquitoes. Everyone started slapping himself and pulling a blanket or a shirt over his head, despite the swelter. Though my malaria medication was supposed to be good, it wasn't fail-safe, so I reached into my bag and dug out mosquito repellent. Because this was the dry season, I had hardly used repellent up to this point; tonight would be a test. Others gathered around as they saw me slathering on the pungent lotion.

"What medicine is that?" Obadiah asked.

"Mosquito repellent," I said matter-of-factly, passing some to him. He asked for directions. "You've never used it?" He shook his head.

The others, waiting their turn, regarded the little red bottle with such amazement that I felt like Aladdin demonstrating my lamp. Only Zuberi looked on with any recognition. "We used this in the Sudan," he said to me. "In the Army."

I felt a prick in my shoulder and reached back to slap it. The action left a stain of blood on my white shirt. Shit, I thought—it was one of the few "confirmed hits" I'd had since coming to Africa. And this was moments after applying the repellent. No precaution, I supposed, was a hundred per cent foolproof. Under the trucks, even with the lotion, there was still a lot of swatting going on. One unlucky mosquito bite, I thought, trying to take the drivers' point of view, could perhaps be likened to one unlucky fuck: you'd probably already had it, and what was the incremental risk of just one more? I wondered if what had been called Africa's fatalism wasn't just a reasonable response to the fact that there was only so much you could do.

I LEFT three days later. That morning, a crowd of people had gathered on the beach of Lake Tanganyika, across the road from the truck yard. Obadiah was among them. He had an uneasy look on his face as I approached. There at his feet, water lapping over its bloated limbs, lay a corpse that had just washed up. "He was a sailor on the lake," Obadiah reported. "They say he fell overboard three days ago when he was drunk." I had never seen a drowned man before. He was gray, and very dead. Nobody touched him.

The crane had still not been unloaded—"Some of these shippers use our trucks to store things for free," Bradford explained—and I had caught my bad finger on some clothing and further torn something inside it. We guessed that it could be another ten days before the truck left Burundi (it turned out to be even longer). I said my goodbyes, traded addresses, took orders for presents. Obadiah and Bradford walked me to a taxi stand, and I left for the airport.

I made it to Mombasa in a day; Bradford and Obadiah's return trip took three weeks. Bradford's truck and Zuberi's, I later learned from Transami, reached home without incident; they had left Bujumbura two weeks after I did, and in the provincial town of Gitega they each loaded about thirty-five tons of coffee packed in sisal bags, like our charcoal. Other trucks from the convoy returned earlier and later. Sammy was back from Ruhengeri, Rwanda, on the twenty-third of October, soon enough to receive a promptness-incentive payment (fifteen dollars). Francis didn't return from Goma, Zaire, until the twelfth of November. And Malek had somehow managed to break down again in Shinyanga, and would be there a while. I knew that would make him happy.

I had several questions to ask Harry Hanegraaf, of Transami, among them details of a story I had heard when we were waiting at the MAGERWA yard in Kigali. A turnboy of Zuberi's had died there two years before, of malaria, Zuberi had told me. Malaria, of course, is endemic to the area, and everyone suffers bouts of it; women and children sometimes die of it, but grown men seldom do. Since Zuberi's English was worse than my Kiswahili, I had had to collect this story secondhand and had heard many versions. What, I asked Hanegraaf, had really happened?

Hanegraaf said the turnboy had been dead several days when drivers brought him to the Kigali hospital from Gisenyi, on the Zaire border. The body was so decomposed, the morgue there claimed, that it could not be put in cold storage; instead—and this outraged the drivers—it was left outdoors. Transami dispatched a truck to recover the body but, realizing the awful shape it was in, finally paid to fly the corpse to Mombasa. ("It's Africa," Hanegraaf said, explaining the expense. "The family refused to allow the remains to be buried in Kigali.") The family came for the corpse at company headquarters, and the casket it had been shipped in was buried at the back of the yard. ("Nobody here would touch it.") Of course, no autopsy was done—who would ever pay for such a thing?—but Hanegraaf had an opinion about the death which differed from Zuberi's. "That turnboy didn't die of malaria," he said. "He died of AIDS." ◆

LIFE AND LETTERS

AFTER THE LAUGHS

Famed for the barbed bon mots she hurled from her place of honor at the Algonquin Round Table, Dorothy Parker, born one hundred years ago next week, saved her harshest words for herself. But occasionally she let up long enough for a deeper talent to shine.

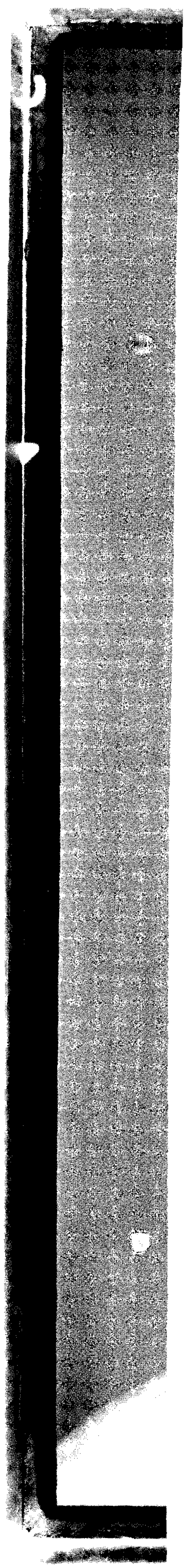
BY JOAN ACOCELLA

Of the many rapid-burnout cases in American letters, one of the saddest is that of Dorothy Parker. Born a hundred years ago next Sunday, she was the last child of Henry Rothschild, a prosperous German-Jewish cloak manufacturer, and Eliza Marston, an ex-schoolteacher of English ancestry. Eliza died when Dorothy was four. Dorothy soon acquired a hated stepmother, but within a few years she, too, died, and thereafter Dorothy and her siblings lived a peaceful, if motherless, life, cared for by Irish servants, in the family's four-story town house at 214 West Seventy-second Street. In later years, Parker rarely spoke of her father without scorn, but according to her most recent biographer, Marion Meade, Henry Rothschild was an affectionate and responsible parent. He sent his daughter to good schools, and when she was gone for the summer he wrote her funny little poems about how much he and the dogs missed her.

When she was twenty, her father died. She was left without money, but she did have a few salable talents. She was good at writing, and she had a quick, acerbic wit. At that time, the so-called smart magazines were being born, and Parker soon found her way to their doors. She was a staff writer for *Vanity Fair* from 1917 to 1920. From 1927 to 1931, under the nom de plume Constant Reader, she was *The New Yorker's* lead book critic. Her light verse, which was what first made her famous, was published in these magazines, among others. Most of her short stories appeared first in *The New Yorker*. When Parker took over *Vanity Fair's* theatre column, at the age of twenty-four, she had never reviewed a play or anything else, but in her first column, which covered five musical comedies, she wittily disparaged most of what she saw. She was a "tired business woman," merely seeking an evening's innocent diversion. And what had she got? Bad seats, noisy audiences, ridiculous shows. One play she dismissed with the line "If you don't knit, bring a book." This particular voice, with its world-weariness, its wicked merriment, its emphatically personal note, was exactly the sort of thing the new magazines were seeking.

At the same time that Parker found the work she needed, she found congenial friends. At *Vanity Fair*, in 1919, she met Robert Benchley and Robert Sherwood, who, like her, were gifted, witty, unknown writers. The three became inseparable, and they attended, together, the first luncheon of what became the celebrated Algonquin Round Table. This group has been so much written about that I will dispense with the particulars here—but it must be said that Parker was the wittiest of the bunch. In a small, sweet, highly cultivated voice ("She talked like a woman who as a little girl had attended a very good singing school," one of her friends said), she would come out with utterly withering remarks. Many of them were too obscene to be printed, but others were printed and reprinted in her friends' columns and passed around town. Meanwhile, she was doing her own writing. Between 1926 and 1933 she published three collections of verse and two collections of stories, all of them big sellers. Her books column is said to have been the first thing people turned to when they opened this magazine. In 1929, she won the O. Henry Prize for her story "Big Blonde." By the early thirties,

Dorothy Parker, photographed by Richard Avedon in New York City, June 17, 1958.



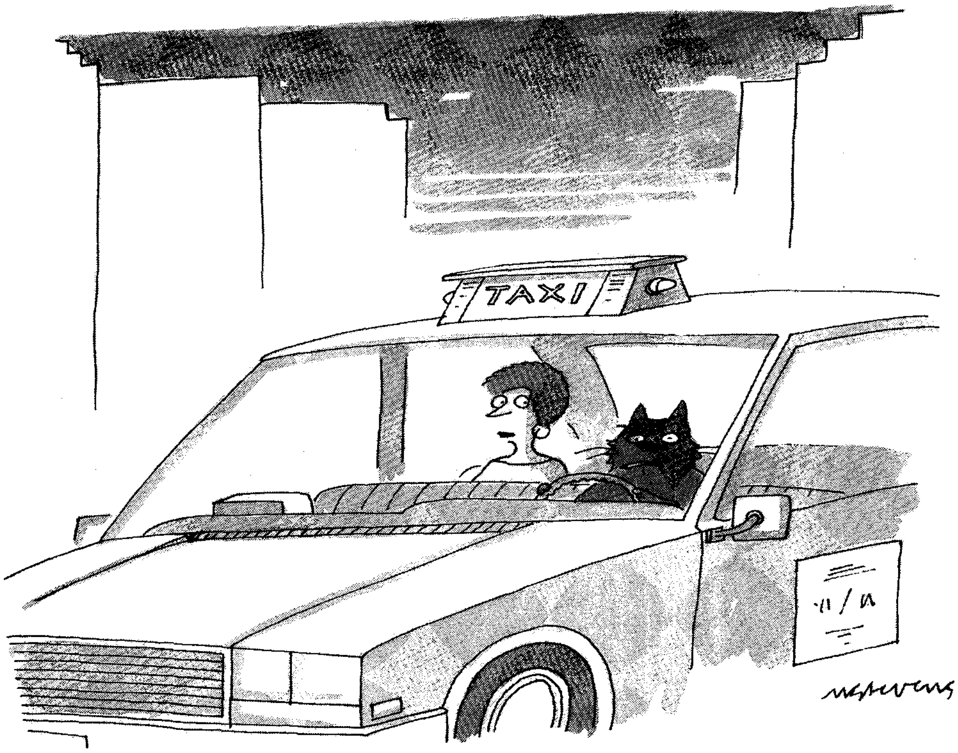
she was a celebrity. Playwrights wrote plays about her; people followed her around at cocktail parties, waiting for her to say something funny.

Success did not bring happiness. In 1917, at the age of twenty-three, she had married a young stockbroker, Edwin Pond Parker II. (She later said she had married Eddie because he had such a "nice, clean name." She did not enjoy being half-Jewish.) Eddie enlisted in the Army, and by the time he got back from the war, in 1919, Parker was part of the Round Table, a world he did not know how to enter. They separated in 1922—not, however, before Eddie, an alcoholic, helped teach Parker to drink. After Eddie, there were numerous affairs, and they took on a pattern. The man would pursue her, and then his interest would flag. She would wait by the phone, eventually falling into despair, which she treated with alcohol. She found that if she took small sips of Scotch all day long the hours passed more easily. At night, she would go out with her Algonquin friends and get thoroughly drunk. She often thought of death, and made this obsession part of her public persona. Those of her poems that are not about lovelessness ("Men seldom make passes /At girls who wear glasses") are usually about death ("Razors pain you; /Rivers are damp . . ."). When she wasn't joking about suicide, she was attempting it. Between 1923 and 1932, she tried four times to kill herself: once by slashing her wrists, once with Veronal, once with barbiturates, once by drinking a bottle of shoe polish.

This was the period of her best work, but her editors had a hard time getting it out of her. She was shameless about deadlines. And even her best pieces showed a certain lack of ambition. "All of her things are asides" is how her editor at *The Saturday Evening Post* put it. Parker knew this, and she responded by despising her own work. When her editor at the Viking Press sent her the page proofs of her first collection of stories, she refused to correct them. She wanted to burn them, she said. He ended up locking her in a room with himself, the proofs, and a bottle of whiskey until the job was done.

She eventually solved her writing problems by ceasing to write. In 1933, at the age of thirty-nine, she met an actor, Alan Campbell, eleven years younger than she. Unlike her other men, Alan seemed genuinely interested in her well-being. He moved in with her; he cooked, he cleaned, he helped her shop for clothes. Alan's acting was going nowhere, and he decided that he and Parker should try screenwriting. In 1934, they bought a car, got married, and drove to Hollywood.

That, effectively, was the end of Parker's career. She lived thirty-three years longer, but in those years she produced only eleven more stories. (Sadly, some of them are among her best.) She also coauthored two plays and wrote occasional magazine pieces. She contributed to about two dozen films, almost always in collaboration with Alan, but she hated the work. Probably their best film was the 1937 "A Star Is Born," which won them an Academy Award nomination. Parker claimed that she never saw the movie—that she went but walked out. Much as she scorned Hollywood, however, it was making her rich. In 1937, she and Alan signed a contract with Sam Goldwyn at a combined salary of fifty-two hundred dollars a week, an astonishing sum that they somehow managed to spend—on houses, clothes, and parties. Parker drank as much as ever. Alan drank more.



"Yeah, I was into the pet thing for a while, but that scene wasn't for me."

What high-mindedness Parker had left she invested in politics. She helped found the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League; according to Ring Lardner, Jr., she briefly joined the Communist Party. And she remained faithful to the Stalinist line long after other American leftists were repelled by events in the Soviet Union. She stopped speaking to many of her friends, accusing them of political cowardice. Eventually, she turned on Alan as well, claiming that he was homosexual. ("What am I doing in Hollywood, at my age and married to a fairy?") She divorced Alan in 1947, remarried him in 1950, split up with him again a year later, then moved back in with him in 1961. When Alan died, in 1963, from an overdose of alcohol and barbiturates, Parker returned to New York, where she passed her last years in an alcoholic twilight. "Don't feel badly when I die," she told a friend. "I've been dead for a long time." In terms of public perception, this was true. When she finally died, of a heart attack, in 1967, the obituaries surprised people. They thought she had died ages ago.

So Parker used her gifts for little more than ten years. But even during that period she tended to waste herself. Her mind was dominated by one idea: the interlocking of vulnerability and cruelty. All her friends, whatever else they remembered about her, remembered her two-facedness: how, as Lillian Hellman described it, Parker "embraced and flattered a man or woman, only to turn, when they had left the room, to say in [her] soft, pleasant, clear voice, 'Did you ever meet such a shit?' " Hellman tried to be understanding: "The game . . . probably came from a desire to charm, to be loved, to be admired, and such desires brought self-contempt that could only be consoled by behind-the-back denunciations of almost comic violence." Most of Parker's friends were afraid of her, but at the same time, they were protective of her.

That pattern—appeal followed by denial, effusion followed by constriction, the female principle, as she came to view it, followed by the male principle—became the rule of her imagination. You can see it in all her work, most obviously in the poems. Line by line they go, telling us about pretty things, about flowers and keepsakes and love, until they come to the last stanza or the last line. Then Parker delivers the sucker punch. Here's a celebrated example:

A single flow'r he sent me, since we met.
   All tenderly his messenger he chose;
Deep-hearted, pure, with scented dew still wet—
   One perfect rose. . . .

Why is it no one ever sent me yet
   One perfect limousine, do you suppose?
Ah no, it's always just my luck to get
   One perfect rose.

It's witty, and so are some of the other poems, but in all of them the message is the same: hope will always be disappointed. And the technique is the same: she inflates the balloon, then pops it.

Parker's book columns for *The New Yorker* also follow the pattern. Almost invariably, she opens with a long comic complaint about her life. "And this was the week I meant to get all that reading done," begins a typical piece. But she couldn't read, she says, because she had the grippe or she was hungover or spring had arrived, and there's nothing she hates more than spring. She's a poor, beleaguered woman, and what do people do? They *write books*, and then expect her to review them. Well, all right. (You can almost hear the gears shifting from vulnerability to aggression.) And she begins her perusal of the week's books, most of them ridiculously easy marks—Emily Post's "Etiquette," Margot Asquith's essays, a collection of poems on Lindbergh's flight, a volume entitled "Favorite Jokes of Famous People," another called "The Technique of the Love Affair," foreign-phrase books, pornography. She takes aim and, needless to say, she scores.

A few of these pieces are still funny. There are times when, reading them, you wish Parker were here to take on Danielle Steel or Shirley MacLaine. And her reviews would no doubt seem more valuable now if the menaces they describe—Lindbergh mania, country-weekend etiquette—were still around to plague us. But many of Parker's victims are not menaces. Joke books, foreign-phrase books: who cares? Many *good* books were being published at the time, books that Parker didn't review. During the period of Parker's Constant Reader column, Edmund Wilson, in his book reviews for *The New Republic*, was writing about John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Hart Crane, E. E. Cummings, Thornton Wilder, Lytton Strachey, André Malraux, Gertrude Stein, Dos Passos, Hemingway, and Eliot, among others. Parker, meanwhile, was shooting Margot Asquith in a barrel. On the rare occasion when she devoted a column to a writer she admired, she nevertheless found something to ridicule—how people misunderstood this writer (Lardner), how they praised that one's novel but ignored his short stories (Hemingway)—and spent most of her words on that. Finally, when she was cornered, when the column was about to end, and she had not said why the writer was good, she would unload some hysterical hyperbole (Hemingway she compared to the Grand Canyon; Gide she compared to the Grand Canyon and the Atlantic Ocean) and then beat a hasty retreat.

The Constant Reader columns are not really book reviews; they are standup-comedy routines. You don't have to listen to her opinion, she says. If she didn't like the book, maybe that's just her hangover speaking. And anyway she didn't really read the book. She skimmed it, or she threw it out the window. She doesn't care much for reading. ("I think the last thing I read was 'Sketches by Boz.' ") Even less does she care for writing. When she composes so much as a telegram, she has to go lie down for the rest off the day.

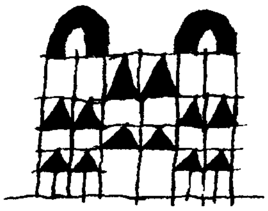
OF all the kinds of writing Parker practiced, the one she did seem to care for—the one she worked hardest on and wanted to be remembered for—was the short story, and her fiction is indeed her best work. Like many of her poems, her stories are about the relations between men and women, but in the stories she is forced to supply details. She can't just say there's a sucker born every minute; she has to say which sucker, and how, and in the process the situation deepens and intensifies. Basically, she is held back from wit. Possibly for that reason, something curious happens to her vulnerability-cruelty formula. Instead of deploying the two forces sequentially—buildup, then letdown—she works them simultaneously. Her heroines are all vulnerability, but from the very start they are observed with a cold precision.

Most famous and best of the stories is "Big Blonde," which tells of the good-time girl Hazel Morse. "Men liked you because you were fun," Hazel learns, "and when they liked you they took you out." Hazel lands a husband, Herbie, but, once married, she no longer feels like being fun. A huge sadness descends on her. "She would cry long and softly over newspaper accounts of kidnapped babies, deserted wives, unemployed men, strayed cats, heroic dogs." To cheer her up, Herbie teaches her to drink, but it doesn't work. Herbie leaves, and the drinking remains. The years pass; Hazel drifts from man to man. One night she changes into her nightgown, swallows twenty Veronal tablets, and, without regret, goes to bed. Nettie, the maid, finds her the next day:

> The bed covers were pushed down, exposing a deep square of soft neck and a pink nightgown, its fabric worn uneven by many launderings; her great breasts, freed from their tight confiner, sagged beneath her armpits. Now and then she made knotted, snoring sounds, and from the corner of her opened mouth to the blurred turn of her jaw ran a lane of crusted spittle. . . . The doctor strode loudly into Mrs. Morse's flat and on to the bedroom, Nettie and the [elevator] boy right behind him. Mrs. Morse had not moved. . . . With one quick movement [the doctor] swept the covers down to the foot of the bed. With another he flung her nightgown back and lifted the thick, white legs, cross-hatched with blocks of tiny, iris-colored veins. He pinched them repeatedly, with long, cruel nips, back of the knees. She did not awaken.

What makes this scene so hair-raising is that it is an inverted sex scene, taking Hazel's situation down to its root, the female body. We see the breasts, the thighs, the nightgown flung back, only now the body is fat and tired, and the occasion is no longer one of fun but one of cold scrutiny, with the three strangers staring at Hazel's nakedness, the doctor pinching her back into life. Never has female vulnerability been more terribly portrayed.

"Big Blonde" is not just Parker's best story; none of the others comes near it. Still, there are about a dozen stories that are hard to forget. Most of them, like "Big Blonde," are about the hopelessness of male-female relations, but their heroines are different from Hazel; they are more intelligent, more nervous, more captious, more like Parker herself. We see them at the speakeasy, drunkenly complaining to their friends about neglect, betrayal. We see them having cocktails with the cad in question while he takes calls from other women. Or we see them at the other end of the phone, calling and wondering who he's in the room with. The telephone turns up again and again. To Parker it seems to have been the quintessential image of male elusiveness. The men in the stories are barely described. They are not really human; they are merely a scarce resource, like money or food—something *needed*. Only the women are real, and what is most real about them is their desperation: the dresses they choose to catch the man's eye, the pearls they have shortened to hide wrinkles at the neck, the fights they pick, the tears they shed. It is a pitiless vision, and it was Parker's only true subject.



In the late thirties, she tried writing stories about the socialist struggle, and she produced one nearly beautiful one—"Soldiers of the Republic," about the Spanish Civil War. (She and Alan went to Spain in 1937.) The story is set in a café in Valencia, and it is full of fine observation: the soldiers briefly reunited with their wives, the babies in patched dresses on their laps. But Parker keeps wrecking the story by interjecting her own guilty-liberal thoughts. At one point, she observes a baby at the next table, with a new blue ribbon in its hair. The bow is wonderfully described—its loops, its determined gaiety. Then:

> "Oh, for God's sake, stop that!" I said to myself. "All right, so it's got a piece of blue ribbon on its hair. All right, so its mother went without eating so it could look pretty when its father came home on leave. . . . All right, so what have you got to cry about?"

This happens again and again. Parker is trying to write a story about something other than herself—about the Spanish people and their courage—but every time she climbs up out of herself she falls back in. And, of course, the thrust of these asides is not altruism but egotism, the selfishness of those who hate themselves. This she could write about, but she couldn't write about anything else.

And that is the tragedy of Parker's career. She has no disinterestedness; she has, basically, no imagination. She seems to feel she has no right to one. People are always telling us how there is no connection between moral strength and artistic strength: how Picasso preyed on women, how Wagner hated Jews, how you can be a terrible person and still be a great artist. But the case of Parker reminds us that, while the relation between morality and imagination may be a complicated one, it does exist. Hope, forgiveness—these are not just moral actions. They are enlargements of the mind. Without them, you remain in the tunnel of the self. Parker was morally a child all her life. She had a clear vision of the bad, but it never taught her anything about the good. In the mid-fifties, when she was the subject of one of *The Paris Review's* Writers at Work interviews, she was asked whether she thought Hollywood had a way of destroying artistic talent. "No, no, no," she replied. "I think nobody on earth writes down. Garbage though they turn out, Hollywood writers aren't writing down. That is their best. If you're going to write, don't pretend to write down. It's going to be the best you can do, and it's the fact that it's the best you can do that kills you." Very brave, right? Take responsibility for what you've done. But, in fact, the criticism is excessive, unrealistic—thereby letting her off the hook, releasing her from judgment into a little ecstasy of self-loathing. For Parker, working in Hollywood was a conscious tradeoff—money for art—as it was for many other writers. And as she had just told the interviewer a moment before, she was quite willing to make the trade: "I hate almost all rich people, but I think I'd be darling at it."

Parker's politics, too, however idealistic-seeming, have an irresponsible quality. Obviously, she acquired her hatred of political oppression by way of her hatred of sexual oppression, and, though this is not a bad way to acquire a social conscience, in Parker's case the resulting political feelings were as confused as her feelings about the sexual situation. She sided with all victims, her friend Wyatt Cooper recalled in a 1968 *Esquire* article. "This sympathy extended to anyone accused of a crime; so long as they were found guilty, she was convinced of their innocence." If, on the other hand, they were found not guilty, she was convinced of their guilt. "Lizzie Borden, having been acquitted, would be forever guilty in Dottie's eyes," Cooper writes. " 'I can sympathize with almost any wrongdoing,' she once told me. 'People are horrified by child molesting, but it seems perfectly understandable to me. The only criminal activity with which I don't completely identify is arson.' "

Parker has been praised for the extreme economy of her stories, many of them less than ten pages long, most of them faithful to the unities of time and place (a taxi ride, a conversation on a patio), all of them sketching in their characters with a stroke or two and leaving much for us to guess. They deserve praise, as the aptest container for what she had to say. But surely she herself must have noticed that her finest story, "Big Blonde," was her *least* economical story, more than twice as long as her average; that it did not observe the unities but covered ten years; and that, despite the autobiographical touches (the alcoholism, the suicide attempt), it was almost the only one of her major stories whose heroine was not like her but duller and nicer—a sympathetic character. Parker's best story, in other words, is her least typical story. It is a voyage out, and that is what she needed. Instead, she pulled in and pulled in, until at last she just disappeared.

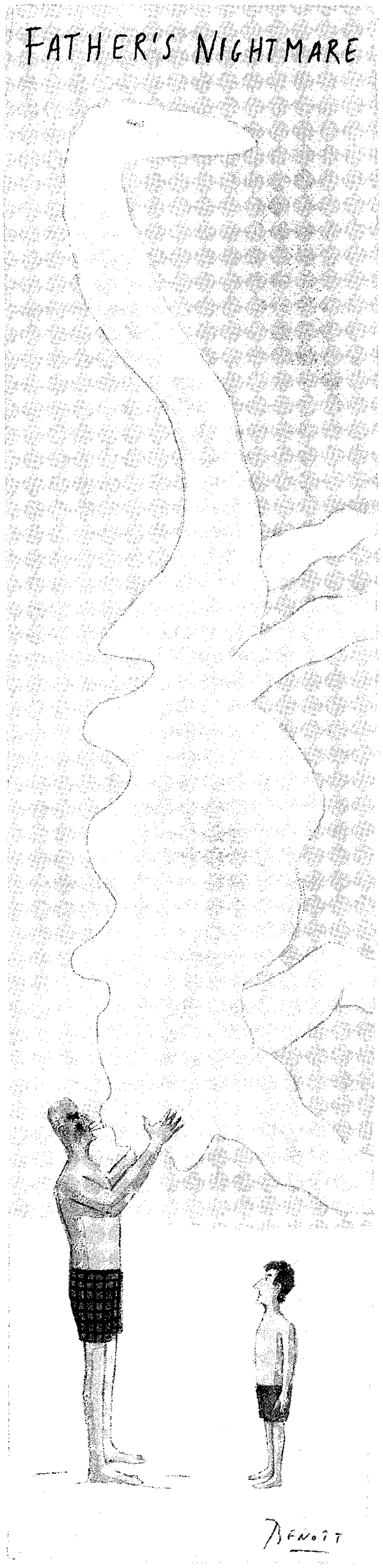
Why did she limit herself so? You can blame the frivolity of the twenties, or you can point to those institutions of the twenties with which she was most closely associated—the Round Table, with its ban on seriousness, or *The New Yorker*, founded and edited by a Round Tabler, Harold Ross. According to James Thurber, Ross was determined to give the magazine "an offhand, chatty, informal quality. Nothing was to be labored or studied, arty, literary, or intellectual." For a while he succeeded. In its first year (1925), *The New Yorker* was full of tiresome, subcollegiate joshing. But Ross's brains and good taste—and also, I think, his curiosity, his interest in the world, a trait in short supply at the Round

Table—got the better of him, and he began producing a magazine that, if light-spirited, was nevertheless serious and well written. By the time his friends from the Algonquin began writing for him regularly (Parker and Benchley in 1927, Woollcott in 1929) Ross had in some measure outgrown them. Eventually he got rid of them. He broke with Woollcott in 1939. He fired Benchley in 1940. Parker he didn't have to eliminate—she stopped filing her book reviews—but in the late thirties he started turning down her stories.

Lack of ambition was not Parker's only problem. There was also her vision of the world as a yin-yang of need and hate. Where did that come from? Two of her biographers, Meade and John Keats, point to the early death of her mother. A third biographer, Leslie Frewin, diagnoses her malady as manic-depressive psychosis. Actually, Parker had a psychiatrist—she started going to him in 1926, right before her second suicide attempt—and his diagnosis was more modest: "pathological drinker." This leaves unanswered the question of what caused the drinking, but does one have to look that far? Edna St. Vincent Millay, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Faulkner, Steinbeck, O'Neill, Thurber, Ring Lardner, John O'Hara, Hart Crane, Sinclair Lewis, Nathanael West, Edmund Wilson, Dashiell Hammett: did all of their mothers die young? A number of these writers had their careers—indeed, their lives—prematurely ended by alcohol. Parker, miraculously, lived to the age of seventy-three, but from about age thirty on she was intoxicated during most of her waking hours. It is no surprise that she achieved so little. The wonder is that she achieved so much.

EVERYTHING Parker wrote that is memorable, and much that is unmemorable, fits neatly into the Viking "Portable Dorothy Parker," the only comprehensive Parker collection still in print. According to a Viking editor, that book is one of the ten best-selling Portables—one slot below Emerson, one slot above Poe. Interest in Parker has not died. The director Alan Rudolph is making a film about her right now, starring Jennifer Jason Leigh. The script is one of those "Ridi pagliaccio" affairs: how bright the Round Tablers were on the surface, how neurotic and miserable underneath. Needless to say, the scriptwriters were not at a loss for snappy dialogue. All of Parker's famous quips are there. Conversation, actually, may have been her best genre. In any case, it is for her wisecracks, and for the poems that read like wisecracks, that she seems to be remembered by the public.

But her unique contribution was her portrait, in the stories, of female dependency. This was a central concern of nineteenth-century women writers—Jane Austen, George Eliot, the Brontës—and also of some of the men, notably Thackeray. (Parker said that she read "Vanity Fair" "about a dozen times a year." Meade believes that Parker modelled herself on Becky Sharp.) But in the twentieth century the rules changed. With the move to the city and the loosening of ties to family and class, women were thrown into a new situation—one in which they should have been freer, and in which some were (witness Sister Carrie) but in which others found themselves wholly abandoned, both by the system that had formerly hemmed them in and by the new one, which still had no place for them (witness Lily Bart). Even after women began to make their way economically in twentieth-century culture, they were still left with an ages-old inheritance of emotional dependency, the thing that marriage and the family, having created, once ministered to and now did not. If in the old days women were enslaved by men, they nevertheless had legal claims on them. Now they had no legal claims, so all the force of their dependency was shifted to an emotional claim—love, a matter that men viewed, and still view, differently from women. Hence Parker's heroines, waiting by the phone, weeping, begging, hating themselves for begging. This is a story that is not over yet. Parker was one of the first writers to deal with it, and she addressed it in a new way. Because, it seems, she identified with the man as well as the woman, she saw these women from the outside as well as from within, heard the tiresome repetitiousness of their complaints, saw how their eyelids got pink and sticky when they cried. She did not feel sorry for them. They made her wince, and we wince as we read the stories—for, burning with resentment though they are, they are even more emphatically a record of shame. Female shame is a big subject, and for its sake Parker should have been bigger, but she is what we have, and it's not nothing. ♦



FICTION

SQUARE ONE

BY JAMES ROBISON

ANDIE came into the library wearing a black rayon dress and pointy white Keds.

"You look so grumpy," Carson said. He had been reading *The Internist's Journal.* He was more or less thrown across a sofa that was stationed by windows showing New England salt marshes and birches and green-black pines and crinkled heaps of July clouds.

Andie said, "I'm sick, remember? And on top of that a loose tooth. And my thighs."

"It's the end of the world," Carson said.

"Don't patronize. And also I'm hot," Andie said.

She went to a tall lamp with a brass stand and switched the bulb on and off. Carson tapped his reading glasses into place and blew a long breath.

"That's right, ignore me," Andie said.

"Who could ignore you?"

"I hate *everything*," Andie said. She was twenty and just awake, with her dress a little snug around her middle and her hair all one thing, pushed sideways and snarled.

Bridget dragged into the library. Her hair was the same shade of blond as her sister's and brushed down to hide her face. She was taller than Andie but three years younger.

"Do something with Bridget," Andie said to Carson. "She's driving me up the parapets."

"Parapets," Bridget said.

"You're just housebound. You should go out or something," Carson said.

Bridget snorted.

"We're not ready for that, Dad," Andie said. "Everything hurts out there. Out there is real ugly news. Ask us to jump over the garage, why don't you?"

Carson rose from the sofa and gave himself up to a twisting full-body yawn. At forty-one, he was bald, with a beard so neatly trimmed it was like a shaped shadow on his jaws and around his mouth. He wore only Madras shorts, and the hardness of his belly and wads of muscle across his shoulders showed.

"Then if you don't want to go out, quit haunting each other," he said.

"We are clinically depressed," Andie said. "You're a doctor, you know."

Carson removed his thin glasses and held them as delicately as if they were an insect specimen. "You guys are dwelling and brooding. A great thing right now would be exercise."

"You're saying we're fat," Andie said.

Bridget nibbled a thumbnail.

HINGHAM was glowing in sea light and powerful sun. The white buildings shone. The post-office lawn glittered a ruthless green under a fall of sprinkler water, and in the harbor a catamaran's sails seemed to burn with their yellow-and-orange stripes. Carson's 1957 Chevrolet ran hot, though he had a mechanic tend to the machine meticulously, and he was sweating freely as he circled the lot behind a low mall of shops.

Arleen was waiting for him in the covered mews between the small shingle-sided stores.

"You're all wet," she said.

"The car's an oven."

"Serves you right, buzzing around in some high-school fantasy."

"You're more the high-school fantasy," Carson said.

Arleen was in shorts cut to exhibit the length and contour of her legs. With the shorts she wore a dead-black swimsuit, and sandals. She was twenty-nine.

"My stomach hurts," she said.

"We're going to eat. The point was that we eat food."

"I don't mean I'm hungry, I mean that my stomach hurts."

They went into an air-conditioned steak restaurant with a low ceiling of rough beams and plaster. Uneven plank flooring. The flag of Wales spanned one wall above a walk-in hearth. They found seats in the back, as was their custom in public places. Bow windows faced the water, and everything smelled new and last-minute—of construction materials and paint.

"What I'm talking about is how I feel about all this creeping around. It's gnawing at me," Arleen said.

"It's necessary," Carson said. He gave their orders to a teen-aged waiter who had dimples, stubble, and a ponytail.

"You don't write this down?" Arleen asked the boy.

"They think it's classier if we just remember. Which I think is total bullshit."

"I'm with you," Arleen said.

"You get a party of nine at one table, you know? And then two more people and their kids all ordering at once; it's a real memory test. It's worse than the S.A.T."

"It is bullshit," Arleen said.

The waiter walked away, and Carson said, "You seemed to like him a lot. With the Clorox hair."

"He's twelve."

Carson unhooked his glasses and slumped. "All right," he said.

"His voice was changing as we talked."

"All right," Carson said.

"This is totally because you feel guilty. As if you were cheating on someone."

"It's all just the timing. There's a method."

Arleen said, "They are grown girls. They are almost women. They would understand that their father is seeing someone."

A sunburned threesome, looking to be in their thirties and just off a boat, came into the restaurant. Carson leaned forward to speak to Arleen in a pushed, quieted voice.

"Yeah, right, but not after only three months. Ninety days."

"You don't know that."

"A father does. I do know. They haven't accepted that she's dead, and they haven't accepted that I'm walking around doing my same work and being the routine beast."

While he talked Carson looked at the woman of the three sailors. She was flushed with sun and boat work, buzzed up by it, as his wife had been when she'd had a day of beach or been out on a friend's boat. The other two sailors were brawny guys in rugby shirts and deck shoes.

The kid waiter brought chilled salads with shrimp.

"I mean, we go to *motels*," Arleen said to Carson. She added, "Maybe you want to go sit with that woman over there."

"What woman," he said.

"Gawk away. Anyhow, I'm getting a urinary-tract infection, I can feel it. If there's anything I hate."

Carson righted his chair, lining up the arms with the edge of the small table. He said, "I'll write you up some sulfamethoxazole and Pyridium. It's nothing."

He swallowed half the iced tea in his glass, fished out a mint leaf, and chewed it down. He dunked a heavy shrimp in red sauce.

"It's not nothing. Jesus, there's something so humiliating—" she said.

"Regulation. Run of the mill."

"I mean how I *feel*, not whether I'm going to die, Carson."

THEY walked the strip of sidewalk behind the low mall, in the splattered shade of nursery-planted trees, out of sight of the road that ran through Weymouth and eventually into Boston.

"We'll get everything in its right place," Carson said. He touched Arleen's bare shoulder, where the daily mile of swimming she did had shaped and modelled her. She shuddered.

"I'm clammy. Skin-crawly," she said.

"You're sick of me," Carson said.

"I just want to know, that's all. One thing. And you gotta swear to be honest."

"Anything."

She stopped walking and swiped her bangs off her damp brow.

"Are we being so covert because of your daughters or because you don't want the clinic and the church and everybody knowing you're popping a receptionist."

"Daughters," Carson said quickly and with force.

After she'd gone, he drove to the greengrocer's, where he pushed a dinky cart into a clearing between banks of misted vegetables. From the hipbone pocket of his Levi's he used a finger to hook out the mashed, damp list Andie had made for him. It said: "Soft Foods. Potassium, high-carbo foods. Pudding? Tryptophan foods. Soft soft soft. Slim-Fast."

AGAINST the heat of the sun, the girls had tacked three aqua shower curtains over the windows of the den, making an undersea light in the room. Big floor fans nodded incessantly: *huh-uh*. The girls were now in cotton T-shirts and boxer shorts, looking like Carson's old uncles who sat on porches with cigars and racing forms. A VCR was showing "Sorry, Wrong Number."

Carson stepped into the doorway of the den. "Could you turn that down?"

"Dr. Kindness. Whoever said Barbara Stanwyck could act? She's so over the top in this," Andie said.

"I did you up some grub. We can eat in here with Barbara Stanwyck or out in the dining room," Carson said.

The daughters looked at each other in confusion, as if they were being challenged and needed to collaborate on some solution.

"Or you may want to be alone. I'd understand."

"It's a stupid film," Andie said, and blacked the TV with the remote. Carson shrugged and propped his hands on his waist.

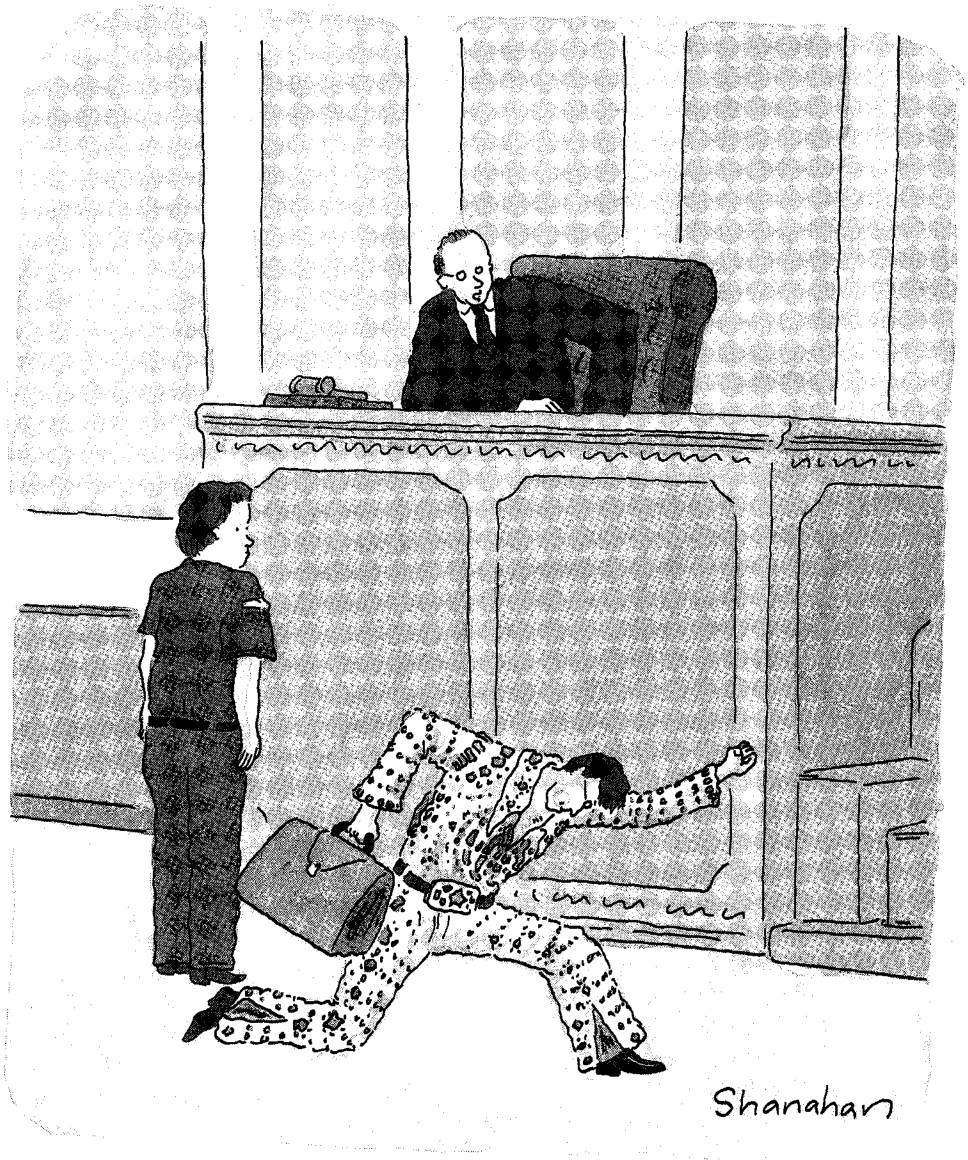
"We can try to eat," Andie said at last.

Sunsetting, amber light put flame shapes on the floors and walls of the dining room. Diagonals of shadows lay beneath the sideboard. Carson fitted a candle into a pewter holder.

"Don't," Andie said. "Really, that's too much. That's too much like Mom."

Carson laid the candlestick on its side and seated himself. He was showered and in a fresh shirt, but his face was hardened into a look of tested patience.

Bridget folded up one leg, bare foot on her chair, to wipe her chin across her bent knee. Carson dealt out food—cold potato salad, cold pasta, cold asparagus salad. Triangles of pink melon on side plates. Into a long silence, he said, "Strikes me as sad that we suffer through



"A unique and stirring plea, counsellor."

a bitch winter, and this spring, you know, some record misery for rain."

"I know where this is going, Dad," Andie said.

"Well, and then the payoff for living here is beach days like this. And nobody's going to the beach."

Andie groaned. She said, "I'm shaky about going to the kitchen. I'm shot to hell and you keep prying at us."

"Tamari," Bridget said, still tasting what she'd licked off her knee. Her father studied her down-turned profile. Her cheeks were firmly padded, round like a doll's, and her nose had a doll's perfect curve and smallness. Even when closed, as now, her eyes looked unnaturally, wonderfully large. She sensed his close notice and pulled down hair, trying to shroud her face.

"Gentlemen, you know what? We are not getting along," Carson said.

"Oh, welcome to the third planet from the sun," Andie said.

"But why do you think that is?"

"Well, be*cause*," Andie said.

He poured himself coffee and spent some time sipping it. He heard the tiny motor sound of a fly. Bridget roughed a mosquito welt on her upper arm, scratching it with her fork.

Andie said, "I mean, because you don't have any feelings or something. You go around with your composure here and at the clinic, and Mother is dead forever."

"Um-huh," Carson said.

"Really, no shit, Dad. It's not weird, it's heinous."

Carson looked absolutely collected, serene, holding his coffee mug. He looked as if he could be figuring a diagnosis.

"Go on," he said.

"Where are we?" Andie said.

Bridget was now watching an ant cross the table.

"And really that's not even the thing," Andie said.

"What's the thing?"

"Like today, didn't you ever notice we aren't exactly beach types? Or no, listen—see, we don't like how we look. Our bodies."

Bridget laughed.

"But you're both so beautiful, that's crazy," Carson said.

Andie said, "He's the abyss. You were right." And Bridget nodded.

Carson poured more coffee in a steady, graceful, measuring gesture. He smoothed the fabric of his shirtfront. "The abyss would like to talk if you want to listen," he said. He settled his mug next to his plate.

"For openers," he said, "Dr. Adjani, right? I talked to him for over an hour about you, and—"

"We know," Andie said.

"You're doing well."

"Oh, now he tells us how we feel," Andie said.

"Even your damned cholesterol count is normal. Adjani thinks you're doing great, considering."

"Considering that he doesn't know anything about girls and condescends and must have never lost anybody close to him. He hasn't said one useful thing, Dad."

"Wait," Carson said.

"Times have changed, and we got lots of dead friends to prove it," Andie said.

"He doesn't care," Bridget said.

Carson hoisted the coffee mug and flung it in a savage backhand, and the mug and coffee exploded on wallpaper.

"Good," he said.

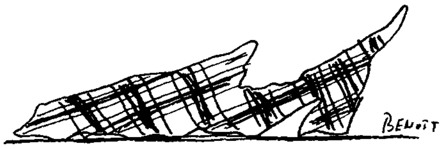
His daughters gathered their plates and cutlery and left. The golden light still flickered in patches on the rug, twitching and shifting. Above the pine hutch an umbrella stain of coffee was breaking into streamers, which flowed downward in shock.

CARSON had been in a bashing storm surf for the last half hour. He was out in breakers off Hull beach—booming, smoking eight-footers making full charges. He did piercing dives through the cresting waterwalls, then swam or waded the shallows between sets, then turned and kept heading out until he could no longer feel sand underfoot. He swam with neck arched, watching for the wave that would lift him like a bubble, like a careless thought, and drive him all the way back in. The best ones massed up exactly parallel to the shore, as if conjured.

He dragged himself through slashing, shin-deep water and pebbly sand, over to Arleen.

"Carson," she said, "you were cute out there. I've never seen you cute." She touched his dripping face and added, "You were frolicking."

He was breathless and burning with cold. He said, "You've no right to laugh at me—when you're so straight out of—dreamsville."



She was alone on this stretch of sand, sitting upright in a wooden chair, wearing a flower-print dress and a platterlike picture hat, seated over her own jagged shadow.

"Your teeth are chattering," she said.

He swathed himself in towels.

"Core temperature," he said.

"Well, get hot fast, your pager beeped six minutes ago."

The clinic was like an upscale motel, with carpeting and potted plants and paint in fruit colors. Doctors in lab coats bustled from the labs to their consulting rooms, through a big lobby where people sat on chubby sofas or armchairs.

Ford, a third-year resident on Carson's team, had a nurse-practitioner in tow. He had a broad, polished face, furrowed now with worry. He was toting three clipboard charts.

"Dr. Hightower, sorry," he said.

"Ten minutes," Carson said.

Carson took a scalding shower in his office bathroom and pulled on a cotton sweater and his lab coat.

The man sitting up on the examining table was gaunt and gray, but in giddy high spirits. He wore a patient's gown and was chomping on gum.

"Hey, at last," he said. "Hello, Car. I screw up your day?"

They shook in an awkward clasp, the man grasping Carson's free arm with both hands and squeezing down.

"No, Ira. How you feeling?" Carson said.

"You missed it, man, a girl jammed something up into me and I tried to enjoy it," Ira said and laughed. "Only this was the size of a Kelvinator. They still make Kelvinators?"

"You got some cramping?" Carson said.

"No, what I got's a football game going in my gut. I'm glad to see you, man."

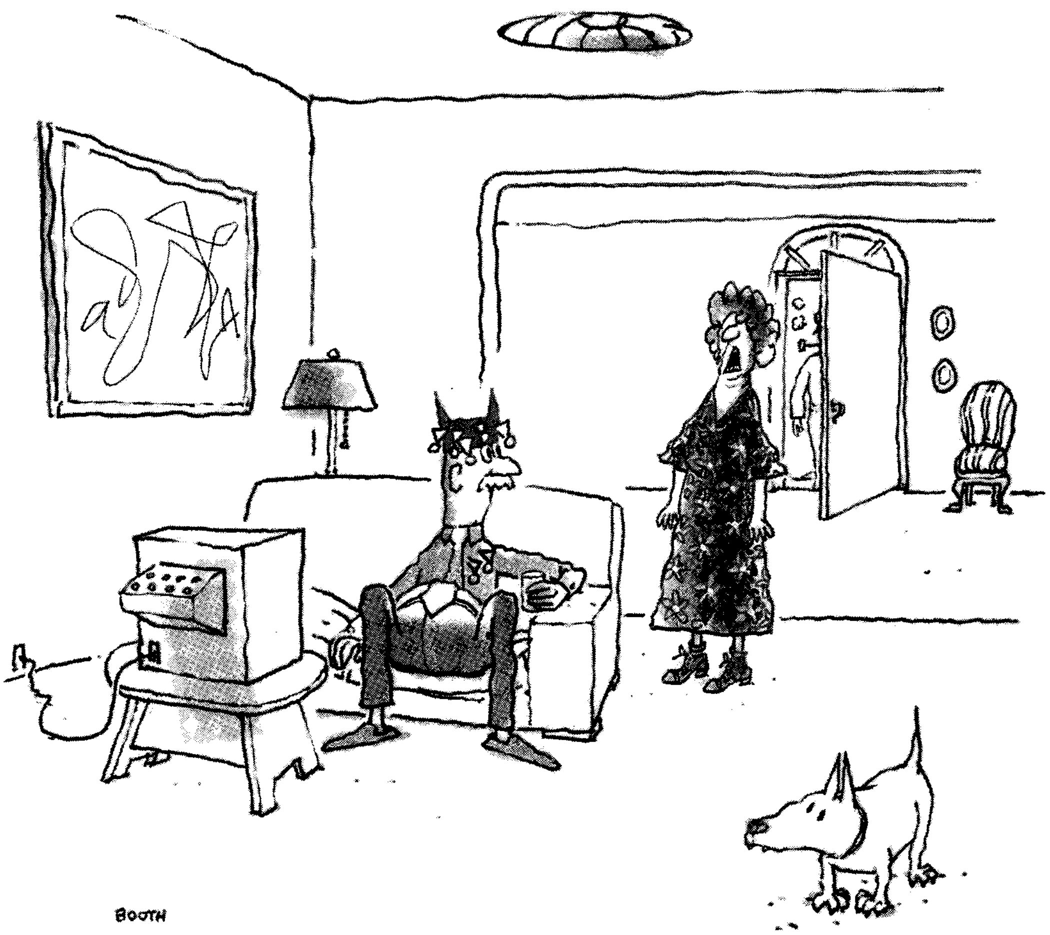
"Well, there's a problem," Carson said.

"Carson. Hint. It's a real bad sign when your doctor's trembling."

"I'm chilled from swimming," Carson said, and tried to return Ira's smile. His hands were shaking and the muscles around his ribs and back still quivering. He wanted to hunch and hug himself.

"O.K., just do it," Ira said.

"Sigmoidoscopy, is what, ah—The



"It's General Douglas MacArthur."

deal is, you have a lump in your colon. It's not supposed to be there."

He stopped and studied Ira's chart for a moment.

"So, am I supposed to fill in the rest?" Ira said.

"It's not supposed to be there," Carson said. His voice was strained and coming out trembly. There was still a muffling water in his ears, and he knew he sounded wrong.

"It's not—" he started, and had to pause and swallow. "I mean, it doesn't mean anything yet. Can we get that straight?"

Ira shook his head. "We should have gone right from Aquinas to Chicago and become furniture movers. We should be sitting in Chicago drinking malt liquor and listening to blues. I think, To hell with the Red Sox. I blame this all on the Red Sox, you know?"

"It means nothing yet, and there are some tests we'll want to do at Boston Med, so—"

"Yeah, but c'mon, this is me. This is *me*."

"It's a tumor. It's not supposed to be there," Carson said. Now his voice was like a warped tape. "But don't jump any guns," he said. "Don't sell the brokerage. Just—"

"Just what?"

"Just be Ira. Do that and we'll do the rest."

• •

ABOVE the kitchen sinks were tall windows giving a view of a monumental elm. A bird feeder was visible there, nailed at the joint of two branches. Bridget had parked a stool and was watching. As Carson came into the room, a jay arrowed from the garage roof and perched on the feeder. The bird twitched about, turning its back on everything.

"Maybe you could explain why I love jays so much," Carson said. The ride back in his hot Chevy had baked the last of the chill from him. "You know, the marsh is practically a sanctuary. Like you see harlequin ducks and more gadwalls now. I saw a shearwater once, but for some reason I love just plain old jays."

Bridget frowned and then shrugged ponderously.

Carson said, "They're blue, for one thing."

"They're pretty," she said. An admission. "But it's like they don't know it. They're raucous and greedy. Sort of pirates, in a way. They go full-bore, all-out. You know, they plant trees."

"No," Bridget said.

"By burying seeds and acorns and then forgetting to go back to get them. When they migrate, other jays come down from the north, so they're always around. They don't desert you."

"Hm, but different birds. I mean, they're all jays but not the *same* jays."

Carson found Andie in the VCR den. She had sheets and throws wound around her like togas. She was embedded in the sofa, eating something, and she spun around to hide the deep bowl among the magazines and knickknackery on an end table.

"Daddy, walk louder," she said.

"I've got a favor to ask you. Somebody for you to meet. The favor is you give her a chance." He was studying his daughter's face hard, but Andie registered nothing.

She said, "Then I have a favor for you. I'm down to one Xanax. I'm asking for a prescription."

"I thought you'd joined the war on drugs."

"Dad, this is serious, I mean it. They're my security blanket."

Carson sat on his heels by a jumble of VCR cartridges and boxes. He picked up "The Awful Truth," a movie his wife had bought and played repeatedly. He found the plastic box for the film and slotted it carefully inside.

"Well?" Andie said.

"Here's what I think we can do. You try a couple days without the Xanax, see how it goes. If you feel panic or agitation, we can talk—"

Andie cut in, shrieking, "God damn it, you are the cruellest man in the world! Do you know that? You are the worst father, the worst doctor, and probably, probably you were the worst husband in the whole wide God-damned world!"

Carson stood up, holding the movie box in front of him almost prayerfully. He said, "You will be happy to know, Andie, that the notion has occurred to me."

But he knew better. ♦

THE CRITICS

BOOKS

SHADOWS AND GARDENS

BY JOHN UPDIKE

In these last three or so decades, the novel has looked for urgency and energy to two bedevilled backwaters, Eastern Europe and Latin America. The rollback of Communism has left Eastern Europe's artistic compasses spinning, and the rollback of the dictators in South America has left the social terrain there somewhat flat, dreary, and ambiguous—of a piece with the bourgeois prairies to the north and in the over-farmed Old World. So it seems, at least, in two short novels by authors from the cone of our shapely sister continent: "Shadows," by the Argentinian Osvaldo Soriano (translated from the Spanish by Alfred Mac Adam; Knopf; $21), and "The Garden Next Door," by the Chilean José Donoso (translated from the Spanish by Hardie St. Martin; Grove; $18.95). Soriano's earlier venture into black comedy, "A Funny Dirty Little War" (1980; English translation, 1986), was a chilling astonishment—a village bloodbath rendered with the hectic, fluid speed of a Keystone Cops comedy. "Shadows," too, suggests a silent movie—a parade of clowns on the desolate Argentine pampas, tracing in their dilapidated vehicles vast dusty circles that implausibly keep intersecting. It is "On the Road" without Kerouac's youthful buoyance and North America's roadside abundance; the first sentence runs "Never in my life had I been on the road without a penny to my name," and one of the two epigraphs displays the late Italo Calvino's opinion that "now the only kind of stories which exist in the world are those that are unresolved and get lost on the road."

DANIEL MAJA

"Shadows" is nothing if not modernist, in the classic, Beckettian manner. Our narrator-hero has no name, save the one that another lost traveller, a former circus proprietor and performer called Coluccini, gives him: Zárate. We learn that this Zárate is a software expert, has been living in Italy, and has a daughter in Spain about whom he feels guilty because he never communicates with her. A train he was riding through the pampas to a town called Neuquén has stopped "in the middle of nowhere." After the second night of non-movement, he begins to walk, lights a fire, is told by a farmhand that this is against the law, finds a semi-abandoned Shell station, washes himself and his underpants at a pump out back, and encounters Coluccini, who drives a Renault Gordini piled high with suitcases and announces, "*L'avventura è finita!*" Zárate accepts a ride, and is off on a close-packed series of adventures in a virtually endless, homogeneous landscape: "I tried to identify a point of reference along the road, but it was all the same: wire fences, cows, the occasional tree, a dumb cloud drifting along." He encounters, among others, a truck driver who, his truck having broken down, hopes to sell his load of watermelons to a passing empty truck; a man with "a smooth, insipid face, the kind you forget instantly," who drives a Jaguar, is unlucky in love, and is named Lem; a dog that bites him (Zárate); a priest who feeds him; a travelling fortune-teller called Nadia, who drives an old Citroën Deux Chevaux; two kids called Rita and Boris, who are on their way to Cleveland in a Mercury; some thieves stripping telephone poles of their copper wire; and, the most bizarre of all, a big man called Barrante, who wears a Perón pin, a suit "missing almost all its buttons," a "wide, shiny mourning band," and a length of hose "wrapped around him up to his neck, [so] he looked like a roll of dried beef."

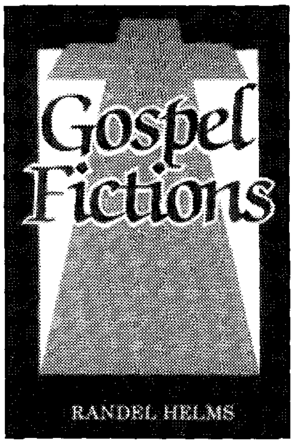
For two-thirds of the way, "Shadows" is a beguiling farce, an uncanny exaggeration of the shadowy, sleepy, muffled, flimsy, gray quality of modern life, especially life on the road, as the landscape dulls down and lives meaninglessly pass and repass: "It all seemed to be taking place at a distance, as if it were happening to someone else or as if I were seeing it in a movie." But the point is not one, perhaps, that can be made at length; at less than two hundred pages, "Shadows" is a third too long. A muddled sting operation that Coluccini and Zárate pull off in a town called Colonia Vela and then a no doubt satirical Independence Day involvement with some stray members of the Argentine armed forces exhaust the reader's appetite for the inconsequential; the line keeps playing out, but we are no longer hooked. Soriano is fascinated by messiness, by messes. The civil mayhem of "A Funny Dirty Little War" was a bloody mess; the messes of "Shadows," though there is a fatal shooting, primarily concern automotive malfunction, squalid poverty, drink, food, and flood. Nadia's Citroën is swept off the road by a downpour:

> The car floated awhile, then slammed against a hummock, and I landed on top of Nadia because there was nothing for me to hold on to. . . . Muddy water began to seep in through the floor, carrying away our sandwiches and covering our feet. . . . I had to dry the ham with a rag. The mayonnaise jar was lost under the seat, but the bread was safe because it had been caught between two cans of oil.

In this dishevelled setting occurs the novel's one scene of lovemaking. Its tenderest scene of healing, stranger still, comes when Barrante removes a speck of dirt from Zárate's eye:

> He turned on the lamp and brought it closer while he raised my eyelids with two pudgy and filthy fingers. His breath was bitter, and his teeth were covered with yellow plaque. Everything he had on was falling apart, and the Perón button was just about to fall off his lapel.

The word "filthy" is recurrent: "Two farmhands riding horses followed by a filthy dog were driving some cattle"; "Coluccini grabbed the gin and staggered out of the store, his shirt hanging



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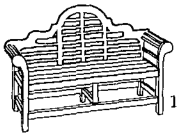

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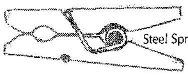

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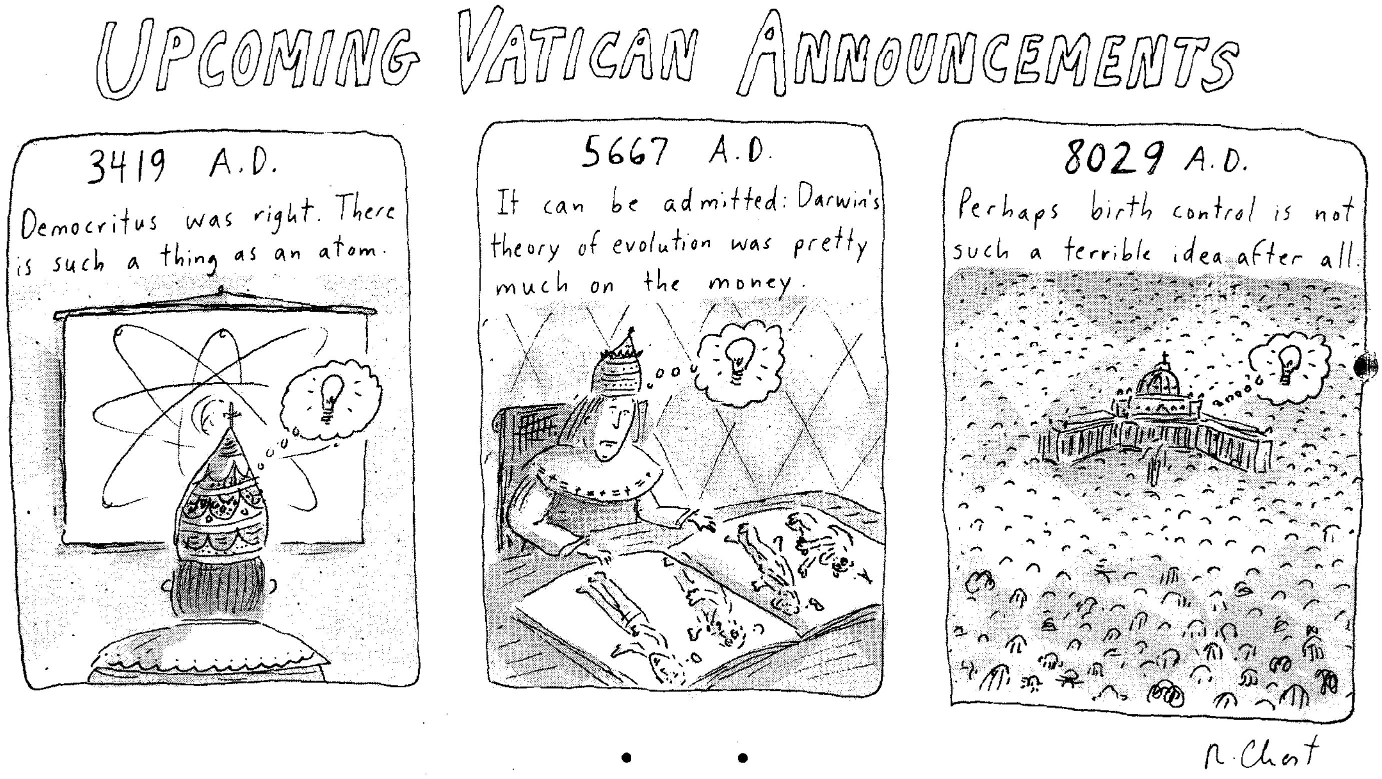
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5667 A.D.
It can be admitted: Darwin's theory of evolution was pretty much on the money.
8029 A.D.
Perhaps birth control is not such a terrible idea after all.
R. Chast

out of his trousers, a sheet of filthy yellow newspaper stuck to his shoe"; up above hangs "the gray sky, where a rather filthy slice of moon was shining through." Such filth confirms the characters' sensation that they are, as Coluccini says, "in the asshole of the world." On the next page, it is said of Argentina, "A country where finding a fortune is a waste of time isn't a serious country." Zárate has known exile, as has Osvaldo Soriano, and, like him, has returned. There is no place like home. He avows that on the vacant, derelict pampas he has "met more people in the past few days than I had in all the years I lived in Europe." And there are certain magical moments in the provincial wasteland: Nadia's wonderfully insouciant and accurate card-reading, Coluccini's acrobatic bicycling on the wires above the ghost town of Junta Grande, and, in that same desolation, the appearance in a lonely mailbox of a letter from Zárate's little daughter, addressed to him simply "*Poste Restante, República Argentina.*" In such moments, the novel reclaims its hapless, drab territory for magic realism. As in the surreal desert of "Krazy Kat," life absurdly persists.

JOSÉ DONOSO'S "The Garden Next Door," as the title suggests, offers a more palpable texture. It begins far from the wastelands of the New World, in the snug Catalan resort of Sitges, which is overrun by European tourists and Latin-American political refugees. In addition to our central characters, the Chilean writer Julio Méndez and his wife, Gloria, and their set of expatriate Chileans, there are:

> Argentinians of all stripes and colors, with conflicting ideologies, but intelligent and very well prepared for exile: the tragic Uruguayans who fled in large numbers, emptying their country; the Brazilians and the Central Americans, all of them running away like us, some of them persecuted, most going into voluntary exile because back home it was impossible to live and go on being yourself, with the ideas and feelings that made you who you were.

To fill their days, the exiles scrape out a living at what jobs they can find, sell handicrafts to tourists, sit in cafés admiring the parade of "Belgians, Germans, and Frenchmen, stuporous from a whole day lying in the sand . . . looking as if they'd been squeezed into their reddened skins, shiny with foul-smelling sun cream," attend Argentine barbecues, sleep with "the blond dryads who came down from the urban forests of the north in search of rest or fun, or of their 'sexual identities,' " lament the way their children are becoming Europeans and losing their Latin-American roots, and endlessly rechurn the political issues and antagonisms that have landed them in Spanish exile. In the backward glance of an unusually successful expatriate, the painter Pancho Salvatierra, Chile is—like Soriano's Argentine pampas—"the asshole of the planet." Salvatierra offers the Méndezes the use of his elegant Madrid apartment for the summer, and the impoverished middle-aged couple, worn down by too much booze and Valium and Sitges partying, gratefully accept.

It is the summer of 1980; seven years have gone by since Allende's fall and his loyalists' flight from the Pinochet government. The luxurious apartment, in the center of Madrid, is reminiscent of the Santiago of Julio's past. The floors, he observes, are parquet and have "the eloquence of the wooden floors of another time, lost so many years ago in the silence of Mediterranean tile floors." Back in Chile, "all the floors creak; as well as a characteristic voice, everyone has a characteristic sound, his or her own tread on wood, a personal signature that follows one around, as inseparable as a shadow." The garden next door, an unexpectedly ample and bucolic park belonging to the Duke of Andía, reminds Julio of the garden of his old home on Rome Street, where his mother lies dying, begging in vain for Julio and his family to come for one last visit: "Why don't they come to close my eyes?" For a time, the garden is inhabited—by the duke's youngest son and blond daughter-in-law and their two children, who live in a smaller house apart from the mansion. Julio, instead of working to revise the novel that has become the repository of all his hopes, gazes into this green paradise and falls in love with the young blonde, who is conducting, Julio comes to see, an affair with a dark young man, a "handsome brute." The novel has a number of surprises, which should be reserved for its readers. As a portrait of a struggling writer, of an embittered yet still viable marriage, and of an exile's paralyzing nostalgia, "The Garden Next Door" is ruthless, deep, and tender. Donoso, like many another writer of the so-called Boom in the Latin-American novel, was infected by Faulkner's circling indirections and cavalier time jumps; this potentially tiresome manner works well enough here, as the meditative Julio obliquely drifts, in his borrowed milieu, toward defeat and renewal.

In an even shorter and more frankly autobiographical recent work, a novella titled "Taratuta," Donoso's narrator speaks of "the cultural references without which reality is only a sketch." Like him, Julio is a compulsive alluder, who fondly sees his blond dryad in the duke's little forest and her smooth young friends as "Brancusiesque," and who, when she is folded in the embrace of her lover, instantly thinks of a painting by Klimt "in which all you see is the heads wrapped in a riot of colors and of gold." His own wife, the tall and patrician Gloria, is appreciated in terms of Ingres's famous "Odalisque" so consistently that she plays to it, winding her head in a towel and presenting her nude back to him. An amoral young drifter called Bijou appears to Julio first as a curly-haired *angelo musicante* from some medieval fresco and then as a Rimbaud-like decadent: "I'd thought I'd recognized the evil blond filth, the perverted defiance in those clear eyes, the dirty uneven teeth of the character in *Coin de table!*" Magritte, Scott Fitzgerald, and Mallarmé's "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune" are repeatedly mentioned—stroked like lucky stones. A sensibility for which life is already so saturated in art has natural difficulty in creating fresh art. The Boom weighs cruelly upon Julio, who may have some of Donoso's sensibility but does not have his secure high reputation. Julio is especially tormented by the fictional maestro Marcelo Chiriboga, "the most insultingly famous member of the dubious Boom," and by the Barcelona superagent Núria Monclús, a literary discriminator of fearsome chic and decisiveness. Artistic ambition is felt as a joyless burden, and release from it as a longed-for blessing:

> Not to go on being a slave to my desire to evoke a poetic universe governed by its own resplendent laws, like the one—in spite of all the unbearable commercial lies—García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, Marcelo Chiriboga, and Julio Cortázar are sometimes able to create. To surrender: the sweetness of accepted failure.

The garden next door to reality is art, and the mysteries of artistic creativity—its inhibition, its successful activation—lie at this novel's center. As in "Shadows," blankness has its paradoxical fertility. When the Brancusiesque young woman dominating Julio's fantasy life departs from Madrid, he reflects, "Since the important thing about beautiful things is the pain of the deep wounds they leave, her presence in the garden may have been an obstacle for me; with her now gone, the empty park may be fruitful." For the writers of the Boom, the New World was a garden where fantasy had flourished from the start. At first, America was taken for Asia and the East Indies, then as a source of endless gold and slave-produced wealth and, later still, as a political proving ground populated by noble savages and unprecedentedly free men. Its history is one long disillusionment, broken by spells of renewed enchantment; ideas and dreams have always been part of its unsteady, colorful reality. The final twist of perspective, in "The Garden Next Door," is a drastic one, and the reader may boggle at its plausibility, but there is no denying Donoso's essential point: it takes imagination to live as well as to write. ♦

The other fine musicians are subdued, as if their leader's star-crossed life cast its shadow on them and some met tragic ends: Will Johnson died of burns after his house was destroyed by fire; Adrian Rollini bled to death in a mysterious car wreck; little-known drummer Charlie Kegley died in abject poverty in a New York welfare hospital, a victim of rheumatoid arthritis; and Castor McCord left the music business and became a hairdresser.—*Liner notes for "1930s Jazz: The Small Combos, Columbia Jazz Masterpieces."*

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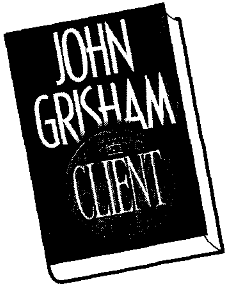

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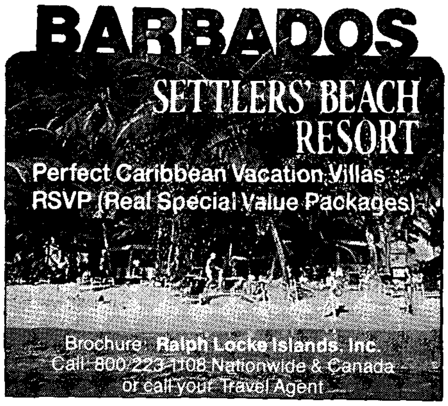
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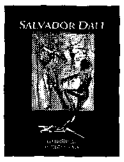

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MUSICAL EVENTS

THE ANGEL OF ST. LOUIS

BY PAUL GRIFFITHS

WHAT do audiences want of a new opera? In times gone by, when composers and their intended hearers were joined in a community of taste, the question couldn't arise: what the audience wanted was measured by what the composer provided, and what the composer provided was neatly gauged to what the audience wanted. Mozart's letters to his father about "Idomeneo" and "Die Entführung," written as those works were being created, suggest how straightforwardly he assumed his audience's reactions would coincide with his own. The subterranean voice that stops the execution of Idamante must sound out only briefly, in order not to exceed the moment of surprise. Mozart knows this because he is writing with the conditions of a theatre and an audience in mind, as if what he is devising were not a score but a public performance already unfolding. And he invites his father to share his vision: "Picture to yourself the theatre, and remember that the voice must be terrifying—must penetrate—that the audience must believe that it really exists." There can be no question of making something that the audience won't understand, or will come to understand only gradually, through repeated exposure. That wasn't possible until artists had started to feel that they were set apart from their audiences—until that juncture marked by Wagner.

Wagner's sublime action was to establish his own language, his own repertory, his own theatre, and wait for an audience to follow him, which it did, and has continued to do. But a second Wagner would be a caricature, and many subsequent composers of opera have tried to begin from an understanding of what the audience might expect. This isn't easy to know. The opera audience—unlike the audience for spoken drama, or novels, or movies—can't express its wishes through its pocketbook, because opera has only on rare occasions been viable as a commercial enterprise. For composers who persist in considering the audience as something other than themselves, the only evidence of what is wanted is provided by what has worked in the past. Hence the recycling of old operatic forms, situations, styles, and tricks in the works of the composers who have been most successful at this game: Puccini, Strauss, and Britten.

"The Midnight Angel," an opera with music by David Carlson and libretto by Peter S. Beagle, takes us further. The piece was introduced by Opera Theatre of St. Louis in June, has already been revived by Glimmerglass, and is due for a third run of performances at Sacramento, in the fall. That stage history, suddenly achieved, makes it a little interesting in the context of arguments about satisfying the audience, since, whatever the creators' intention, its success so far has come about as a result of its appeal to those responsible for the repertories of three companies across the country—its appeal to people who are bound, as artists are not, to try to second-guess their audiences. What's more, the nature of that appeal seems clear. Nobody is claiming that this is an opera of outstanding artistic worth. The point is, rather, that the piece appeared likely to offer something that audiences would feel comfortable with, even fond of.

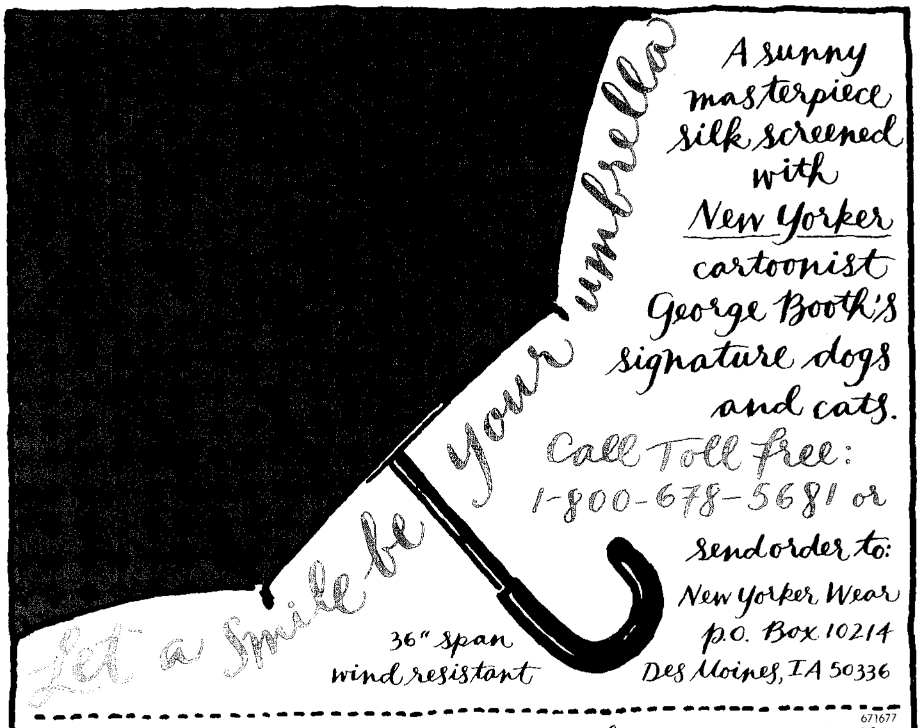
One can understand why the impresarios of St. Louis, Glimmerglass, and Sacramento might have thought this. They may even turn out to have been right. "The Midnight Angel" is an extrapolation from Strauss and Britten, directly recalling the last of Strauss's op-

FILIP PAGOWSKI

eras, "Capriccio," in its dramatic material, and looking back to both composers in being a functional play that music hopes to heighten. But, where Strauss and Britten were modelling their works and their style on those of the central repertory, Mr. Carlson is modelling his on their modellings. Shadows cast poor shadows. Much of the rich pleasure of Strauss's operas comes out of their exultant show of themselves as derivative: "Der Rosenkavalier," the Mozart comedy launched on waltz rhythms from the next century; "Capriccio," the conversation piece that revolves around the black hole of self-reference. In Britten, the duplicities are different. We see in "Billy Budd," also presented at St. Louis this year, a simple transfer of Melville's story to the stage, but we hear—in the plaintiveness of the Novice's Friend, in the self-hate of Claggart, and in the continuing self-punishment of Captain Vere—a host of messages about homosexuality cramped by rules and codes as rigid as those of the eighteenth-century navy, or of traditional opera.

The St. Louis "Billy Budd" revealed the subtext plainly and ordinarily: Colin Graham's production was direct, in the costumes of the Met staging. One novelty was the use, for the first time since 1951, of the original, four-act version, and therefore of the Act I finale that Britten allegedly cut when ungenerous critics spoke of Gilbert and Sullivan. Here it seemed more like a fat number from a Broadway show of the period, with a choral paean following the outline of "I Got Rhythm." Otherwise, the show's main interests were vocal ones: in particular, the tenderness of Stephen P. Salters as the Novice's Friend and the candor of Steven Combs as Billy.

Alongside such an example of subverted artistic propriety in the St. Louis season, and alongside the remembered image of "Capriccio" which it conjures, "The Midnight Angel" evaporated. The music contains nothing to worry anyone: it idles on blandly, occasionally recalling Ravel or Strauss, but generally staying safely characterless. The setting is grand—duly so, for an opera in the manner of operas, since one of the abiding conditions of the genre has been that the audience should be able to bask in splendor or exoticism reflected from the stage. Here we're offered the London house of a fictional Lady Neville in 1907, with the whole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second act a ball scene. Such a private-party, noble-house location looks back to "Capriccio" by way of Barber's "Vanessa"—a line of descent strengthened by the fact that each work revolves around the intimate life of an aristocratic woman, the only difference being that she's growing older from opera to opera. Lady Neville is described as being in her sixties, and the part is obviously made for a singer who is at a late point in her career, with a personality that the years have burnished into force: Elaine Bonazzi at St. Louis took the role as a gift.

This aging of the protagonist is piquant. The Countess in "Capriccio" is not only an operatic character but the character of opera: she represents the medium in keeping her equilibrium between the rival claims of poet and composer, and in causing all who enter her house to tie themselves up in operatic scenes. It's therefore appropriate that the corresponding figure in "The Midnight Angel" should be older, since we're half a century on in the history of opera, and appropriate, too, that her household should be less cohesively harmonized. The poet is still around, and still has a flowery name, John Lorimond, but there's no composer, perhaps because there's no longer any pretense that music is what makes opera work. Also, the subplots aren't neatly dovetailed into the central personality, as they are in Strauss's opera. The supporting characters are either pure cliché (the pair of young lovers, Lady Neville's niece Margaret and Lord Henry Allardyce) or incredible (Captain Compson and his blowsy mistress, the Contessa dei Candini), in both cases disclaiming responsibility to any reality beyond the stage.

What also disclaims such responsibility is the narrative, developed out of a story Mr. Beagle wrote as a graduate student. A "Dinesen imitation," he has called the original piece; one might also think of Edgar Allan Poe, heavily diluted. Lady Neville is bored. Taking charge of other people's lives no longer amuses her (here she speaks, indeed, as the personification of opera). She announces that she will give one last ball, and invite Death to it. Gosh, says everyone. The ball takes place; Death arrives in the shape of a beautiful young woman and is quite a hit. Please stay, says everyone. So she does. But somebody has to take her place, and Lady Neville decides this might be a way to relieve her ennui. Opera does not die. Opera becomes Death. "The Midnight Angel," which has coasted along without trying to be right about anything, at least ends by being right about itself.

It's hard to be right about anything else if you're so determined not to give offense. Whether or not Mr. Carlson asked himself what audiences might want, he placed himself in pawn to the most routine expectation by accepting what worked for Strauss and Britten, and expunging the respective playfulness and pain that made those composers' works individual. "The Midnight Angel" might be alarming if one were to take it as a true measure of audience need: nothing powerful, nothing even striking, nothing real. But probably it shows only that "What does the audience want?" is a false question, unless it's being asked in order to create pastiche by a Strauss or subterfuge by a Britten. For the audience isn't a separate entity but a body of people to which composers belong, and in order to discover the wishes of audiences they have only to consult the audience representatives nearest at hand: themselves.

To posit an audience of others is to imagine some beast needing to be soothed and distracted. Mr. Carlson's score delicately skirts the edges of commitment to musical ideas; Mr. Beagle's amplification of his story overloads a sketch with magniloquent nonsense. The butler Dickinson, who is alone onstage at the beginning and the end of the piece, and who seems in some imposed, Pirandellian way to control the luckless antics of the others, concludes the opera with this observation: "Dying is certain, Death is inconstant, You may be Death, and never know. Therefore be gentle, Therefore have mercy . . . the night has long to go." Big words, little thought.

One might have wanted to pity the people who had to put the piece on the stage were it not that Ms. Bonazzi, as I've suggested, cut a figure to scorn pity. She didn't need any real material in order to create an imperious, deeply self-centered personage. It was much sadder to see and hear James Maddalena finding his strength and sympathy confined inside the husk of Captain Compson, and sadder still to have to watch this eager company chasing clouds. ♦

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

ON THE RUN

BY ANTHONY LANE

"THE FUGITIVE" is adapted from the old TV series, but, unlike similar projects—"Dragnet," "The Addams Family"—it relies on the simple, nagging hook of the original plot. Wrongly accused of murder, a doctor named Richard Kimble goes on the run and fights to clear his name by nailing the true culprit. The leading role, which was taken in the series by David Janssen, goes to Harrison Ford. If that doesn't count as an improvement, nothing will. For one thing, it provides the extra dash of suspense that comes with every Harrison Ford picture: What will he do with his hair? Throughout "Star Wars," you stared at Han Solo and wondered how a civilization advanced enough to wage war in space could still allow its heroes to wear their hair over their ears, like mid-career Beatles. Ford turned up in "Presumed Innocent" with an unexpected razor cut, and now, in "The Fugitive," he has shaggy locks and a beard. They give him an ecclesiastical air; if he slipped on a robe and held up two fingers, he could pose for a Greek icon. As the movie progresses, he is forced to change his appearance: the beard has to go, the hair is darkened, old clothes are sloughed off in favor of new. It's an ideal Ford role, because it beckons us to the heart of his appeal: he is an old-style leading man, rock-steady and scornful of outward show, yet that reticence allows him to dissolve into a crowd. He is always Harrison Ford, but he could be anyone.

JOSH GOSFIELD

Kimble is a vascular surgeon who comes home one night to find that his beloved wife has been bludgeoned and shot; she dies in his arms. He tells the cops that he grappled with her attacker, a man with a prosthetic arm; they listen carefully to Kimble's story, then book him. He is found guilty and sentenced to death, and we still haven't reached the end of the credits. The director, Andrew Davis, is not a man to hang around and think things over; these opening minutes are an editor's dream, hopping sweetly between crime and punishment, from grainy flourishes of slow motion to the melancholy hues of courtroom and jail. If you're waiting for the movie to brighten up, forget it; one of the many likable things about "The Fugitive" is that most of it takes place in lousy weather. Under a warm sun, all this running around would seem a bit of a lark, but Harrison Ford is up against wet trees, dead leaves, and a sky the color of soapy water. You can smell the desperation condensing around him in the air.

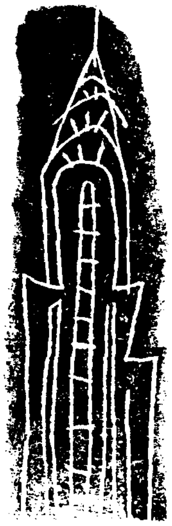
Not that the movie feels sluggish; it comes studded with set pieces, more athletic than violent. Even the crash that allows Kimble to go free, involving a bus, a train, a hillside, and a brace of firearms, is there to make you gawk, and even applaud, rather than flinch. Davis isn't too worried about finding new stunts; he just wants to stage bigger, crunchier versions of your old favorites. When word comes that Kimble is heading for a dam, for example, you sit forward and lick your lips, in full confidence that someone will shortly be leaping into a large body of water without holding his nose. On the debit side, you can also be sure of hearing the line "Only one person in a million could survive that fall."

Despite the tight job that Davis does

on the movie, a few of these clichés still leak in. Most damaging of all is the soundtrack, which was composed by James Newton Howard, and is even more mindless than the one he wrote for "The Prince of Tides." It appears to be based on the principle that nothing is as scary as hitting a drum apart from hitting it harder; this reaches a lunatic level when Sam Gerard, the deputy United States marshal who is tracking Kimble, walks around the scene of the original crime. The music is so loud that we can barely hear ourselves *think*, so heaven knows what it must be like for him—especially since he's played by Tommy Lee Jones, one of the few actors who can give a convincing impersonation of deep thought. Gerard wants his man, and nothing—no dumb Chicago cops, no head-splitting composer—is going to get in his way.

Jones is the best supporting player in modern movies, and is cut from the same cloth as Harrison Ford; to call them tough guys is to remind oneself that toughness begins in the brain. The most basic action picture—and you can't get more basic than this—is charged and refined by the presence of men who know precisely what has propelled them into action. "The Fugitive" represents quite a jump for Andrew Davis; until now, his most successful work has starred Steven Seagal and Chuck Norris, both of whom look as if they only just discovered fire last week. Ford and Jones come from the other end of the evolutionary scale; you can see it in the amused horror that twitches across Kimble's face when a bunch of cops get into the elevator with him, or in Gerard's initial reaction to the train wreck. "My, my, my, my, my," he says. "What. A. Mess."

Any other actor would have run those three words together, and probably would have shaken his head as well, trying to look concerned. Jones, however, is unimpressed—indeed, faintly contemptuous, his intelligence rising lightly above the occasion. He tends to keep his lines back, count a beat, and then deliver them, so that the angle of his response to the world grows ever more oblique, and more entertaining. He even gets a laugh out of the phrase "Thank you." Sam Gerard is a pure pro, yet somewhere inside him there's the flicker of a dandy: a mind that delights in carving order out of chaos, with a grave, cunning joy in getting things to go his way, and the ability to hold still while everyone scuttles around him. At one point, he issues orders to his team without so much as looking their way. Soon, only one of them is left idle.



"What are you doing?"

"I'm thinking."

"Well, think me up a cup of coffee and one of those chocolate doughnuts with the little sprinkles on top."

Oddly, this was the moment when I first took "The Fugitive" seriously. Davis's previous work, "Under Siege," in which Steven Seagal managed to save the world without disturbing his ponytail, was a machine-tooled slab of pulp, about as good as an old Bond movie. Leanness was all; there wasn't an ounce of ordinary experience in the film—no little sprinkles on the doughnut. So it's a relief now to see Gerard taking time out from the plot to feel hungry, and putting the thrills on hold for a couple of seconds; you feel the same way when Kimble, risking everything by sneaking into a hospital, pauses to make an emergency sandwich with a patient's scrambled egg. It makes you laugh, although it's not strictly a gag; it's more the comedy of impromptu wit, when life suddenly appears broader and more chancy than cinema would have us believe. "The Fugitive" warms up in the presence of flesh and blood, which is something very different from blood and guts. The tale may have been borrowed from TV, but there are people like Ford and Jones having to live through it, and their involvement strips the hoariness away.

We are left to relish the peculiar pleasures of the chase picture, where the bloodhound sniffs his way into the soul of his prey. That's happened already this summer, thanks to "In the Line of Fire" and the sneaky, brow-darkening rapport between Clint Eastwood and John Malkovich; add the new pairing of Ford and Jones, and we may have a small trend on our hands. If so, it's very welcome, a strong rebuff to the sentimental horrors of the buddy-buddy convention that has blighted cop films over recent years. You could call it the Friendly Foe movie: two people whose intense enmity leads them to a pitch of understanding, of private common ground, denied to those around them. They thrive on brainpower, and feed on rare scraps of each other's weakness; above all, they stay at arm's length, and only draw close at the end. In both movies, they finally come together in a crowded hotel, as if the intimacy between hunter and hunted were too weird to allow them to meet alone.

"The Fugitive" is no masterpiece; it goes on too long, and Davis tends to snatch at incidents that don't fit. At one point, Gerard and his men go after *another* fugitive, which can only confuse the issue; there's no real preparation for the scene, and no followup, and it makes you wonder whether the movie is heading for a second major derailment. Davis recovers his nerve, though, and the film stays on track, pursuing its unusual course: sombre, and frightening, but never less than fun. Kimble looks genuinely harrowed, and there's something juicy and inspiring in the spectacle, because you know what he must do to relieve the pain. And the relief is all there in the final, gasping confrontation, although it's hard to suppress a twinge of unkind regret. Nothing, you feel, should be settled so easily. Richard Kimble is a fugitive to the core, a creature of flight; and, whatever the justice of his quest, you half hope that he will go on running forever, harried by Gerard, away into the dark. ♦

THEREIN LIES A TALE DEPARTMENT

[*From the Asheville* (*N.C.*) *Citizen-Times*]

ASHEBORO—Wart hogs can jump, and because of that the North Carolina Zoo is closing the exhibit for eight weeks.

If you have a definite roommate preference, and want air-conditioning, you must send in your application, along with your roommate, as early as possible.—*Flyer for the Duke University lacrosse camp.*

At least, you don't have to provide your own air-conditioner.

BOOKS BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

Look At It This Way

by Justin Cartwright
(Random House; $21)

THIS British author's witty fourth novel is reminiscent of "The Bonfire of the Vanities," but here the city under anthropological scrutiny at the end of the Greed Decade is London rather than New York. Tim Curtiz writes for the magazine *Manhattan* from his flat in Holland Park, and his columns are filled with ironic commentary on Merrie England's past and present: Billingsgate fish market, pantomimes, the changing shape of the English bum. He finds himself unexpectedly flush when the American Eagle credit-card company hires him as a "Euro-savant" to star in its new commercials, a financial lark that introduces him to a copy writer, Victoria of the bruised-fruit lips (Is she a sack artist? he wonders), and Bernie the character actor, who really *is* the larger-than-life Cockney he portrays. The ever-hopeful Bernie is hoping to write a musical about the Blitz; Victoria wants to ditch her nightmare yuppie ex and pursue her academic passion for the paintings of George Stubbs. As these characters try to decide which illusions best represent the "authentic" London, Cartwright, unlike Wolfe, playfully calls his own authenticity into question, and the events described—illegal currency trading, kick boxing in the East End, the hunt for an escaped lion in Regent's Park—seem less like elements of the plot than like visual flourishes, tricks in perspective. Finally, it is just you and the author's flickering visions of the city itself. Luckily, they entertain from every angle.

The Invention of Truth

by Marta Morazzoni; translated from the Italian by M. J. Fitzgerald
(Knopf; $18)

THOUGH little is known historically about how the Bayeux tapestry was made, the truth invented here makes it the creation of a French queen and three hundred other crack embroiderers, who show up at their liege's call. For the queen, the tapestry represents a patriotic and pious contribution on the order of winning a battle or erecting a cathedral. Her helpers concur, but for them, travelling from circumscribed lives, the endeavor also represents a rare freedom, and, in the case of a woman from Amiens, her first chance to experience the sea. As she approaches collegiality with her queen, a parallel is spun out about John Ruskin in old age, the servant who approaches collegiality with him, and a visit to the Amiens of a later age. If this brief novel's glimpses of character were only poetic and cerebral (and they are both), there would be little reason to read it, but smuggled into the chaste prose is a very traditional romance, with royalty, heroism, and quasi-mystical suggestions about individual connectedness that can transcend class and time.

GENERAL

Galileo, Courtier

by Mario Biagioli
(Chicago; $29.95)

IN this brilliantly original reëxamination of Galileo, Biagioli frames the mathematician's career within the intricate play of etiquette, rhetoric, and patronage at Italian princely courts. Galileo wanted the sanction of a powerful patron to legitimate his revolutionary practice of using mathematics to describe nature, and in 1610 he obtained the patronage of Cosimo II de' Medici by dedicating to him the "Sidereus nuncius," with its telescopic revelation that Jupiter has four moons, mindful that Cosimo identified the Medici dynasty with the mythology of the planet's namesake. As an opulently paid member of Cosimo's court culture, Galileo advanced his new science, duelling with other philosophers in disputes where even heretical claims were allowed if they were put forward merely as hypotheses, and where what counted was the style, wit, and elegance of the performance. Galileo was celebrated even at the papal court of Urban VIII, until he broke the rules of baroque discourse by asserting the physical reality of the Copernican system. Biagioli observes that Galileo's undoing fitted a pattern common to the fall of court favorites, and suggests that his condemnation was as much a product of court tensions as of the theological threat of his scientific doctrines.

The Last Empire: De Beers, Diamonds, and the World

by Stefan Kanfer
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $25)

LIKE many business histories, this book about diamond mining in South Africa is the story of a dynasty, the Oppenheimers. By 1902, when Ernest Oppenheimer reached Kimberley—sent out by a London diamond merchant—great fortunes had been made by an earlier generation of adventurers, and Cecil Rhodes had transformed a lucrative and uproarious free-for-all into a lucrative and staid cartel. But Ernest was one of five brothers who could see opportunities that other men missed, and in the next decades, as older mining magnates died or retired, Ernest and his kinfolk proceeded from strength to strength and company to company, buying some, creating others. This lively, informative work inspires mixed feelings. Kanfer does describe the appalling exploitation of black labor in the mines, and the lengths to which De Beers—one of the Oppenheimers' firms—has gone to control the world diamond market and keep prices up. Still, as Kanfer tells it, the Oppenheimers, though more generous and politically liberal than most South African whites, were the best of a bad lot.

Listening to Prozac

by Peter D. Kramer
(Viking; $23)

AS perhaps everyone knows by now, Prozac is an antidepressant drug that has received sensational (in both senses) press coverage. The psychiatrist author's stated aim in this hefty volume is to address the philosophical questions this "miracle cure" for depression raises about the nature of self and personality, and the uneasiness stirred by a drug that can transform them. However, the tone of the discussion is dutiful at best, and the heart of this text is a love letter to the drug, encoded in the kinds of case histories that make compulsive but frustrating reading: highly selective and correspondingly superficial. Though the author is well informed, and fastidious to the point of being finicky, great insight is not offered here. But you may want to rush out and get a prescription for the drug. ♦

SHOUTS AND MURMURS

PASS THE CHIPS

BY MARK LEYNER

I WAS excited to read recently about a new technology that enables parents to automatically block out television programs that they consider deleterious to their kids. This technology utilizes an unoccupied portion of the television signal which can serve to transmit a ratings code for shows that feature excessive violence, nudity, sexuality, and naughty words. So we'd have "V" for violence, "N" for nudity, "S" for sex, "O" for obscenity, etc. And your TV set or cable box could then be equipped with a computer chip that could be programmed to block out shows with any or all of these ratings.

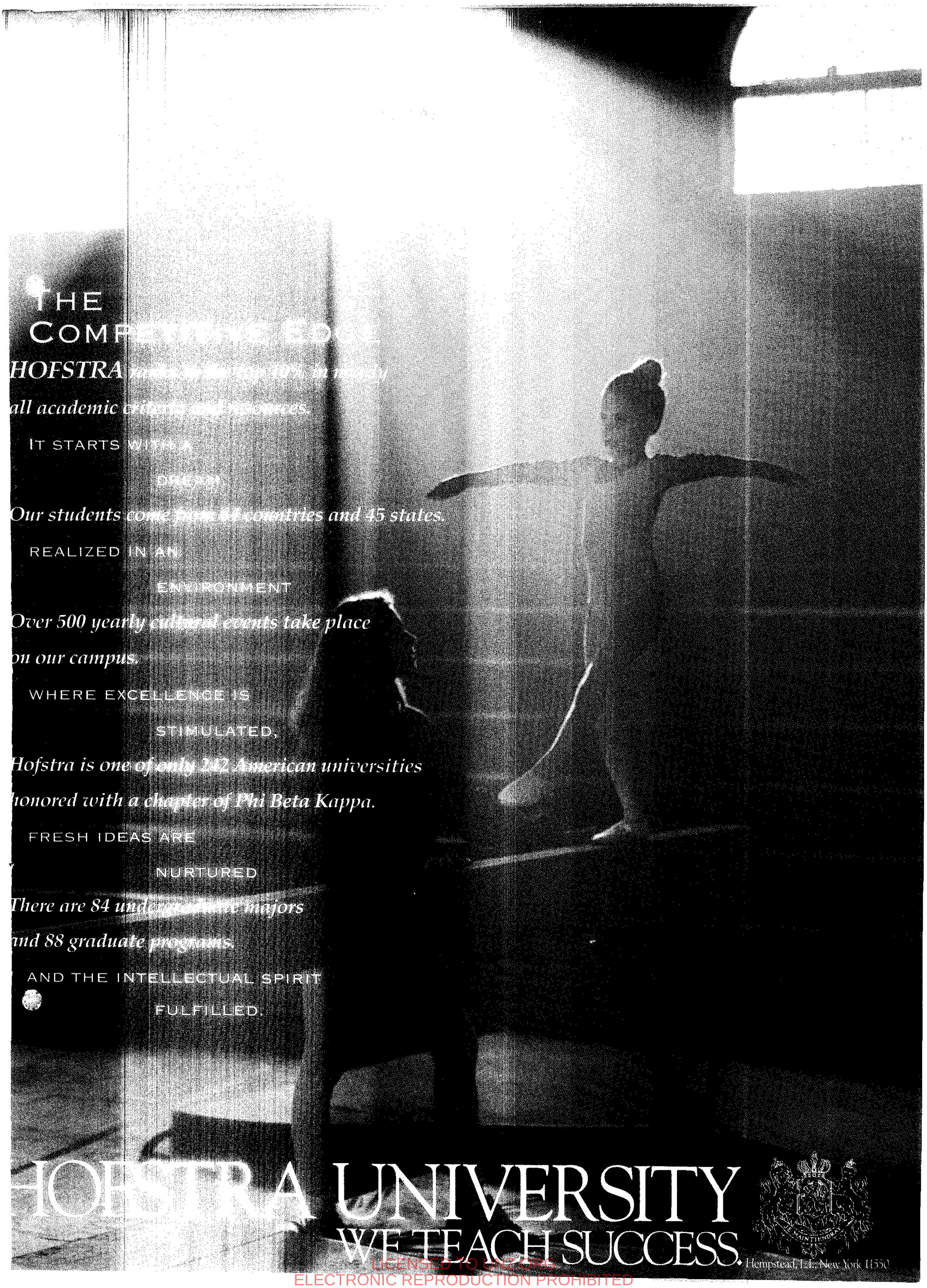
Now, you probably think I'm about to hoist the oriflamme of the First Amendment and wage a holy battle against any gadgetry that facilitates censorship in any form. Sorry. I have a brand-new daughter, and I'm already aware of the grim reality: technologically speaking, it's us against them—us, the parents, against them, the kids. My kid, Gabrielle, is only five weeks old, and somehow she has already learned how to manipulate the signal from her baby monitor so as to jam my microwave and VCR when she's cranky. Her mother and I have just hired a pediatric counterinsurgency expert from the Rand Corporation to assist us in eavesdropping on and, if necessary, interdicting some of the electronic communication that our daughter is involved in. So I applaud the new technology—it gives us a critical new weapon in our parental armamentarium.

I'm disappointed, though, in the selection of targets at which the lock-out chips are being aimed. A "V" chip for violence? An "N" chip and an "O" chip for nudity and obscenity? Come on! On any given promenade through New York City, Gaby's going to encounter the brutal economic disparity between rich and poor, which is more profoundly violent and, over time, more morally inuring than any shoot-'em-up or love-in-the-afternoon flesh fest she'll ever see on the tube.

I'd like to make the following recommendations to the Federal Communications Commission for further televisual exclusion. How about a "J & L" chip that will enable me to lock out "John & Leeza from Hollywood"? Have scientists sufficiently studied the neurological effect of this kind of stultifying pabulum on the developing brain? Until they do, I want it scratched from little Gabrielle's television carte du jour. What about a "KL" chip, a "PS" chip, and a "B" chip—Kathie Lee, Pauly Shore, and Barney? I don't want that sludge clogging up the Gabster's synapses, any more than I want lead-paint flakes in the girl's Lucky Charms. And I'll be the first to call the local Nobody Beats the Wiz to order an "AH" chip. There's no way I'm going to permit the unctuous, sycophantic repartee of "The Arsenio Hall Show" to etch itself upon the tabula rasa of my little G's mind. I'll also be at the front of the line for a "CRC" chip—a Charlie Rose Condensing chip—which will automatically modify Charlie's obtrusive and verbose interview style. I'd like to be able to get a word in edgewise at the breakfast table when Gab starts talking. And I'm sure I'm not the only parent who will opt to install an "MT" chip—"Masterpiece Theatre." I'm sorry, but I just don't think it's healthy for Gabrielle to be exposed to Edwardian bachelors who resemble the members of Duran Duran discussing the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand week after week. And I propose an "SV" chip—Single Viewing. It's fine to watch "It's a Wonderful Life" once, but not fifteen, twenty, forty times. Such obsessive viewing habits can foster a dangerous confusion between knowledge of trivia and erudition. Young people can come to believe that knowing the derivation of "Zuzu's petals" is as valuable as knowing which countries were the Axis powers during the Second World War. As a teen-ager, my sister Chase watched "Funny Girl" in its entirety some seventy times. She came to regard Fanny Brice as a spiritual icon and prophet, like Joseph Smith. Today, Chase is a loving mother and an accomplished actress, but not without having had to undergo a fortnight of rather harrowing deprogramming in a New Brunswick motel room when she was twenty-one.

Lest you think that I'm some kind of hyperintellectual anti-television snob, let me assure you that I'm quite the TV addict. Give me a turkey club, a Scotch-and-soda, and some ESPN, CNN, QVC, C-SPAN, "Kojak" reruns, scalp-paint infomercials—whatever—and I'm a contented man. I've even met with my local-cable-company president about the feasibility of a twenty-four-hour Thesis Defense Channel. But we'd be naïve not to be concerned about the effect of the hegemony of television over, for instance, our kids' literacy. Just the other day, I was interviewed by the young editor of a very hip magazine, and she asked me what I was reading, and when I said George Eliot's "The Mill on the Floss" she immediately assumed that it was a book about dental hygiene.

It's time for us parents to draw a line on our television screens that our kids cannot cross. We owe it to the little ones to show some guts, take a stand, and let the chips fall where they may. ♦



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